

# **Investigating a personalised site-specific approach to performance: selected origins, possible influences and practical implications**

by  
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## **DECLARATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Central to a site-specific approach to performance is the concern for the potential of unconventional spaces. Appearing in multiple mediums, there seems to be little clarity on the parameters of this approach and it appears to have become a flexible term under which a plethora of manifestations have begun to collect. The aim of this thesis is to investigate a personalised site-specific approach to performance in order to provide insight into the role of the director in this approach, as well as to identify possible characteristics that might differentiate a site-specific approach to performance from other outdoor performance genres.

Selected visual arts movements of the 1960s and 1970s which contributed towards the gradual development of a site-specific approach are Dadaism, abstract expressionism, minimalism, performance art, happenings, and land art. Artists involved in these movements challenged the traditional idealisation of aesthetic art works by placing importance on the physical experience and creation of art works. Eventually involved artists abandoned the galleries all together, exploring the potential of unconventional spaces through installations and performances. Theatre practitioners such as Artaud, Grotowski, Schechner, Malina and Beck contributed, amongst other things, on the breaking down of the theatre space, removing the stage and seating in order for the performance to engulf the audience in the action.

Site-based performance was influenced by the above mentioned practitioners. Possible categories collected under this umbrella term are site-sympathetic, site-adjusted, site-specific and site-generic. Practitioners currently exploring these individual approaches in the Western Cape are amongst others Samantha Prigge-Pienaar, Louise Coetzer and Nicola Hanekom.

A practical investigation of a personalised site-specific approach to performance, led to the following conclusions. Firstly, a site-specific approach to creating a performance requires the director to step into the role of facilitator, making decisions in response to the site rather than controlling the site. Secondly, the term site-specific is not fixed, as it expands and develops with the unique needs of every site. Thirdly, it is restrictive to say that elements like music and/or props cannot be brought into the site; however this depends on the nature of the site. Fourthly, while a complete set of characteristics cannot be made absolute for a site-specific approach to performance two key features of this approach are the centrality of the site and the interactive relationships. Lastly, a site-specific approach to performance asks for a paradigm shift, whereby everything that is considered part of the traditional theatre should be reviewed.

## **OPSOMMING**

Die potensiaal van onkonvensionele ruimtes is sentraal tot 'n plek-spesifieke benadering tot performance. Daar blyk egter nie duidelikheid te wees oor die begrensing van hierdie benadering nie en dit lyk asof dit 'n buigsame term is waaronder 'n hele aantal moontlikhede kan voorkom. Hierdie tesis stel dit ten doel om 'n persoonlike plek-spesifieke benadering tot performance te ondersoek ten einde groter insig te verkry ten opsigte van die rol van die regisseur binne hierdie benadering, sowel as moontlike eienskappe te identifiseer wat hierdie benadering tot performance van ander buitelug performance genres onderskei.

Gekose visuele kunste bewegings van die 1960s en 1970s wat bygedra het tot die geleidelike ontwikkeling van 'n plek-spesifieke benadering was Dadaïsme, abstrakte ekspressionisme, minimalisme, *performance art*, *happenings* en landskap kuns. Kunstenaars wat by hierdie bewegings betrokke was, het die tradisionele idealisering van estetiese kunswerke uitgedaag deur eerder klem te plaas op die skep van en die fisieke belewenis van kunswerke. Op die ou einde is daar wegbeweeg van gallerie en is die potensiaal van onkonvensionele ruimtes deur middel van installasies en performances ondersoek. Teaterpraktisyns soos Artuad, Grotowski, Schechner, Malina en Beck het onder andere bygedra tot die herkonstruering van die teaterruimte, deur die skeidslyn tussen die verhoog en auditorium weg te neem en die gehoor in die aksie te dompel.

Plek-gebaseerde performance is onder deur bogenoemde praktisyns beïnvloed. Moontlike kategorieë wat by hierdie sambreelterm ingesluit word, is plek-simpatiek, plek-aangepas, plek-spesifiek en plek-generies. Praktisyns wat tans van hierdie benaderings in die Wes-Kaap ondersoek sluit onder ander in Samantha Prigge-Pienaar, Louise Coetzer en Nicola Hanekom.

'n Praktiese ondersoek van 'n persoonlike plek-spesifieke benadering tot performance het tot die volgende gevolgtrekkings gelei. Eerstens vereis 'n plek-spesifieke benadering tot die skep van 'n performance dat die regisseur die rol van fasiliteerder moet vervul, wat besluite neem in antwoord en reaksie op die ruimte, eerder as iemand wat die ruimte probeer beheer. Die term plek-spesifiek is tweedens buigsam deurdat dit na aanleiding van die unieke behoeftes van elke ruimte ontwikkel of uitgebrei word. Derdens is dit beperkend om van die veronderstelling uit te gaan dat elemente soos musiek en/of rekwisiete nie in die ruimte ingebring kan word nie, die aard van die ruimte sal dit bepaal. Vierdens, alhoewel daar nie 'n volledige stel eienskappe vasgestel kan word vir 'n plek-spesifieke benadering tot performance nie, is twee hoof kenmerke van hierdie benadering die sentraliteit van die ruimte en die interaktiewe verhoudings. Laastens vereis 'n plek-spesifieke benadering tot performance 'n paradigmaskuif, wat alle elemente wat deel uitmaak van die tradisionele teater in heroerweging neem.

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*Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase –*

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background to and rationale for study**

Approaching a Masters' thesis, specifically from a director's point of view, I initially was confronted with two challenges: (1) finding a single focus in a plethora of options; and (2) identifying a possible methodology that could suitably be applied to this focus. Having directed what could be considered as conventionally staged plays for two years, exploring playwrights from Pinter to Beckett, I was hoping that my research would eventually lead me to breaking away from the confines of the proscenium arch stage. Adding to my desire to escape the more traditional in search of the unconventional was also a growing frustration with the apparent lack of newly published contemporary scripts available in South Africa. After experiencing the potential of co-writing and directing a script for my final honours production in 2011, *Have you seen me?*, and having had the opportunity to perform it at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in 2012, I found an interest starting to develop with regard to writing/creating my own scripts based on the social situations currently observed in the country. One specific theme that began to influence my ideas and writing was Xenophobia and the implications that this has had on space and ownership of space. Another factor that began to influence my decision with regard to the potential direction of my research was a growing fascination with practitioners who were engaging in site-based work in the Western Cape. In the light of our country's history, particularly with regard to the 1913 Natives Land Act<sup>1</sup>, I was particularly drawn to the ability of such works to become reactive to the rich history of local sites. For me, site-specific performance was an opportunity for people to engage with our history in an interactive way, unite or mobilise communities, or create debates and evoke critique. Central to the development of this fascination was practitioner Nicola Hanekom, an actress/director/writer who – amongst other things – explored a trio of site-based works in the Western Cape. My interest in her text-based approach to the site, and her role as director, led to Hanekom's work being my first introduction to the possibility of approaching site-specific performance from a director's perspective. Although this acted as a starting point, theoretical research soon led me towards the importance of influential practitioners found in Europe, the UK and USA who had contributed strongly towards the pioneering of site-specific performance.

Having first been introduced to site-specific performance from a performer's perspective – as part of my physical theatre training during my undergraduate degree – my understanding of site-specific performance was limited, especially with regard to the position of the director within the approach. Looking to further my knowledge, a theoretical study was done surrounding the origins of the term "site-specific" which was established in the 1960s and 1970s in the visual arts movement. Although information exists in the form of reviews and video footage, sourcing theoretical research done on site-specific performance by contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> In 1913 a new act was passed in South Africa which became known as the Natives Land Act. This act "established the basis for territorial separation by setting aside reserves for exclusive African occupation and preventing Africans from buying land outside these areas" (Seleti 1999:245). As a result, only a little more than seven percent of the land area of South Africa was allocated to Africans, which in turn affected many Africans' way of life. Similarly, in 1923, the Native (Urban Areas) Act "gave local authorities power to establish separate locations for Africans and restricted the purchase of land by Africans outside these locations" (Seleti 1999:245).

practitioners and theorists such as Wilkie, Koplowitz and Monk proved to be an initial challenge for the study. One essay that did prove helpful in this instance, however, was Gay McAuley's (2005:27) *Site-specific performance: place, memory and the creative agency of the spectator*. Investigating "What happens when performance occurs in real places within civic spaces of the community, rather than in the theatre buildings designated and reserved by the community for this activity", McAuley's essay acted as a preliminary departure point for my understanding of site-specific performance. Realising that site-specific practitioners are not the only ones interested in the use of unconventional spaces for their performances, with street theatre and performance art being two other approaches, an initial, brief clarification of the term site-specific will be given as a departure point for this study.

Extending directly from the art movement in the late 1960s towards the early 1970s, led by pioneering artist Dennis Oppenheim, the term site-specific was promoted and refined by installation artist Robert Irwin. Irwin (2011:218) defines site-specific art as sculptures that are "conceived with the site in mind; the site sets the parameters and is, in part, the reason for the sculpture", placing emphasis on the unique relationship between the site and the work. Happening artists Alan Kaprow and Claes Oldenburg were responsible for the initial transition from site-specific art to site-specific performance. Happenings, although occurring "without rehearsal, audience, or repetition" (Kaye 2000:108), could be seen exploring a seemingly primary concern that resonated in site-specific performance, namely that the performance is "devised, designed and executed in situ" (Wrights & Sites 2000). This concern is evident in Pearson's definition (in McAuley 2005:32) of a site-specific approach as performances that are:

...conceived for, mounted within and conditioned by the particulars of found spaces, existing social situations or locations, both used and disused. They are inseparable from their sites, the only contexts within which they are intelligible. Performance recontextualises such sites: it is the latest occupation of a location at which other occupations – their material traces and histories – are still apparent: site is not just an interesting, and disinterested, backdrop.

This definition by Pearson suggests that site-specific performances should exist in a single site, unable to be removed and incapable of existing in alternative sites. Buren (in Suderburg 2000:3), however, raises an issue surrounding the use and understanding of the term site-specific, stating that it "has become hackneyed and meaningless through use and abuse". Even though several other contemporary practitioners also seem to wrestle with the current use and understanding of the term site-specific (see Wilkie [2004], McAuley [2005] and Kwon [1997]), it is not a new point of contention.

In 1968, artist Robert Barry spoke about the nature of a set of individualised wire installations. During this interview he declared that the work was "made to suit the place in which it was installed. They cannot be moved without being destroyed" (Barry in Kwon 1997:12). Richard Serra can be seen echoing similar concerns to that of Barry in a letter written fifteen years after Barry's statement. Fighting against the relocation of his work *Titled Arc*, Serra (in Kwon 1997:12) wrote that the work was "commissioned and designed for one particular site: Federal plaza. It is a site-specific work and as such not to be relocated. ...to

move the work is to destroy the work". Serra's statement was made from the perspective of a visual artist and provoked me to question whether or not the same could be made applicable to performance.

In both cases, Barry and Serra can be seen echoing the same concern regarding the importance of the site, as focused on in the definition by Pearson (in McAuley 2005:32). Seeing that site-specific art works were originally concerned with the impossibility of reproduction, it is important to note how current site-specific groups, such as *Wrights & Sites*<sup>2</sup>, and *Brith Gof*<sup>3</sup> are showing concern for the meaning behind the term site-specific. Adding to this concern, Kwon (1997:97) describes the term site-specific as becoming associated with "movable under the right circumstance", rather than a specific approach to creating site-based performance. During the 1990s, a range of manifestations of site-specific performance could be seen collected under one overhanging term, which McAuley (2005:29) refers to as site-based performance. According to theorists Wilkie (2004) and McAuley (2005), these sub-categories were suggested as a way in which practitioners could potentially extend the longevity of such site-based work, without losing the essence of what site-specific performance should be. Terms used to refer to these sub-categories include site-generic, site-adjusted, site-sympathetic and site-specific (*Wrights & Sites* in Wilkie 2004:54). Differentiated mainly through their use of *site*, environmental art/performance group *Red Earth*<sup>4</sup> (in Wilkie 2004:52) expanded on the potential of these separate categories:

Some projects are completely site-specific, i.e. they could not take place anywhere else without losing a strong thread of meaning and connection; while other more flexible projects may work around a certain sense of place, i.e. the spirit or concept at the heart of the project would work in several – but not all locations.

A question that emerges from reflecting on this is: *When does a performance stop being site-specific and in turn become something else, and according to what criteria?* Another question that comes to the fore is: *To what extent are these different possible sub-categories of site-based performance being utilised by practitioners?* According to contemporary South African site practitioner Louise Coetzer (2013) the use of these categories is seen as "more for the academics [...] amongst practitioners it is generally accepted to use the term site-specific as people immediately understand what you are referring to and what to expect". In this statement, Coetzer illustrates Buren's (in Suderburg 2000:3) concern about the use and "abuse" of the term site-specific. While this is an issue that is presently being discussed in Europe by site theorists and

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<sup>2</sup> *Wrights & Sites* was formed in the UK in 1977 by artist-researchers Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti, Phil Smith and Cathy Turner. While focusing on a number of different projects, the basis of their work explores people's relationships to places, landscapes, cities and walking, emphasising the porous relationship between art and life.

<sup>3</sup> Founded in 1981 by artistic director Mike Pearson, and later joined by Cliff McLucas, *Brith Gof* intended to move the focus away from the traditional script, encouraging a strong physical exploration. The predominant interest of this group was based on the ecology of ideas, aesthetics and practices that foregrounds the location of performance. Although it experimented in a number of locations away from the proscenium arch stage, the company only fully immersed itself in site-specific performance in 1988.

<sup>4</sup> *Red Earth* is an international environmental arts group that specialises in creating installations and performances in response to the natural landscape. The group, which has been in existence for 20 years already, is led by co-directors Caitlin Easterby and Simon Pascoe. Based in Britain, this company has created work in Europe, Java, Japan and Mongolia.

practitioners like Wilkie, Kwon and McAuley, my focus will remain on the application and understanding of this term in the Western Cape, as this is where I have come to see it in use.

Prominent practitioners, who have established site-specific performance in South Africa through festivals such as *Infecting the city*<sup>5</sup> and the *Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees* (KKNK)<sup>6</sup>, as well as other independent projects, include Jay Pather, Nicola Hanekom and Mark Fleishman. Promoting the use of the term site-specific, as well as investing in its visibility in South Africa, Pather, Hanekom and Fleishman have become responsible, to a certain extent, for the understanding and meaning that other practitioners and audience members attach to the term site-specific (Kennedy 2012). This, in my opinion, has made the term site-specific problematic, particularly in the Western Cape, as instead of being understood as a specific approach to performance, it seems to have become a general term for outdoor theatre. This was specifically noticeable in the four performances *Bly*, *Offer*, *Skrikkeljaar* and *Trippie*, which were labelled as “Plekspesifieke teater”<sup>7</sup> at the 2013 KKNK. Besides taking place in unconventional performance spaces such as a “Tamatiestoor”<sup>8</sup> and on a bus, very little information is given with regard to the criteria that such performances should meet in order to be thought of as site-specific. Two further examples of the current treatment of the term can be seen in Hanekom’s trio *Lot*, *Betesda* and *Babbel*, as well as in Fleishman’s *Onnest’bo*.

Although Hanekom’s site trio has been labelled as site-specific, it is through her ability to reproduce these works in a range of alternative sites that the definition (and use) of the term has become questionable (Kennedy 2012). This is specifically true with regard to Hanekom’s performance of *Lot*, which has been performed in Pretoria, Cape Town and Oudtshoorn, utilising a generic site, a car park, in each instance (Kennedy 2012). McAuley (2005:47) comments on this transportation of site-specific work, explaining that “[t]here is a lot to be said about the way ostensibly site-specific works function when uprooted from their originary (sic) places and taken on tour, sometimes being diminished by the ‘placelessness’ (sic) that follows”.

Reviewing the Magnet Theatre’s site-specific performance *Onnest’bo*<sup>9</sup>, one can begin to see the impact of McAuley’s statement. In an article in the *South African Theatre Journal*, Fleishman and Davids (2007:150) comment on how *Onnest’bo* “became more of a conventional theatre event over time... arguably [loosing] something of its ‘moving’ nature as its performance space changed”.

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<sup>5</sup> Coordinated by Jay Pather and Brett Bailey, this is an annual festival that takes place in the city centre of Cape Town.

<sup>6</sup> The English translation is: Little Karoo National Arts Festival.

<sup>7</sup> This is the Afrikaans term for “site-specific”.

<sup>8</sup> Direct translation: tomato storeroom, but referring in this case to a barn/large shed where performances were scheduled during the run of the KKNK.

<sup>9</sup> *Onnest’bo* was first performed at The District Six Museum in July 2005; however, since then it has been touring to schools and alternative locations portraying important themes of forced eviction and the repercussions of the Group Area Act from 1966 (Baragwanath Unplugged 2005).

## **1.2 Problem statement**

It seems as if theatre practitioners in the Western Cape are starting to use the term site-specific for any performance that takes place outside a conventional theatre space. Such performances, although performed in an unconventional site, are not necessarily wholly dependent on the site, but in some cases rather make use of generic sites. In doing this, practitioners are removing the site-dependent nature of performances usually categorised as site-specific when taking the initial clarification of this term into account, blurring the parameters of this specific approach to performance. It also appears that, through the increased use of the term site-specific, particularly in the Western Cape, this term has become loaded with different understandings of its possible characteristics. Therefore, it seems that very little separates the site-specific approach from that of other outdoor theatre genres.

## **1.3 Primary and secondary research questions**

In order to address this problem statement efficiently the following primary research question has been proposed: Are there identifiable characteristics for a site-specific approach to performance? To inform this main research question, the following secondary questions will also be investigated in the study:

- How did visual artists of the 1960s and 1970s contribute towards the development of a site-specific approach to performance?
- In what way did the use of space by directors Artaud, Schechner, Grotowski, Malina, Beck and Boal influence a site-specific approach to performance? What is the purpose of a site-specific approach to performance?
- What is the role of the director in a site-specific approach to performance?
- What are the implications of moving a site-specific performance between sites?
- What are the characteristics of a personalised site-specific approach to performance?

## **1.4 Research design and methodology**

This study will use a two-tiered research design, consisting of a theoretical study and a practical study. These two aspects of the study should not be thought of as independent components explored separately, but rather as interconnected and informative of one another. Since theoretical insight into my subject matter is sought, the theoretical study will be presented first.

According to Remeni and Money (2012:72), “theoretical research draws on ideas and concepts which represents the cumulative body of previous research and through a process of reflection and discourse develops, extends or in some other way qualifies the previous work”. Beginning with a critical review of the existing secondary source material relating to this subject, my initial investigation focused on the possible origins of and primary influences on the term site-specific. Using a qualitative approach, a selection of artists, practitioners and theorists were investigated in order to construct a foundational literary study of the subject. The importance of this historical source based analysis of content was to lead the study to specific conclusions which would enlighten the praxis. Creswell (2013:7) supports this by explaining that a

theoretical study “seeks to develop relevant, true statements, ones that can serve to explain the situation of concern”. Jax (2014) adds to this, saying:

A theoretical study is one that does not depend upon an experiment, manipulation of variables or empirical evidence, it is based on testing, exploring or developing theories, and it generally involves observation or compilation of information [...]

Both Creswell (2013) and Jax (2014) emphasise the importance of the theoretical study being a source of enlightenment, alluding to further investigation, which in this case took the form of a practical investigation. Another component of this theoretical study is the inclusion of empirical data collected in the form of personal interviews. These exploratory interviews were incorporated to gain qualitative data, also aimed to enlighten the praxis, as well as gain an understanding of other practitioners’ processes.

Practice-related research, according to Candy (2006:1), can be divided into two parts, namely: (1) Practice-based research, which refers to “an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice”; and (2) Practice-led research, which “is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for the practice”. From this it can be derived that my study will follow a practice-based research methodology, as the focus of the study is on the acquiring of new knowledge through praxis. Worthen in Leavy (2009: 135) elaborates on the importance of Practice-based research by explaining that

In social research, performance can serve many research purposes, including [...] discovery, exploration, and education. Although often considered a representational form, performance can be used as an entire research method, serving as a means of data collection and analysis as well as a (re)presentation form.

Here, Worthen explains that performances have become more than a means of representation but rather a way to investigate, gain knowledge and challenge conventional ideas surrounding a specific topic of investigation. Unquestionably, Worthen emphasises that in the Practice-based research design praxis should be placed as the focus of the study, whether it be as sole research contributor or as a tool to test and gain further knowledge. Little (2011:21) adds to this by explaining that performance should act as a vehicle of research, whereby practitioners are able to identify challenges, question problems and investigate meaning behind familiar creative methodologies, enlightening not only the researcher but also those involved in the practical project. In the context of the above, both Little and Worthen understand Practice-based research to be a study whereby theories and knowledge can be tested through the means of a practical study in order to create insight into a chosen field of research. For this reason, it was seen as an appropriate methodology for this study as by placing the praxis as the focus of this study I hoped to not only understand site-specific performance from a theoretical standpoint, but also challenge these theories by applying them in a practical study. Initially understanding site-specific performance from the peripheries, my knowledge of this approach to performance had to expand beyond the opinions and work of the selected practitioners contributing



towards its development establishment. Through practice I hoped to bridge this gap, expanding on my understanding of a personalised site-specific approach to performance.

Spanning over six weeks, the purpose of the practical study was to investigate a personalised site-specific approach to creating a performance. Using students from the Stellenbosch University (SU) Drama Department, the rehearsal process was conducted over five weeks, with three showings of the performance in the sixth week. Choosing two sites for this project, referring to them as the primary and secondary sites, the entire rehearsal process was restricted to the primary site until the final week of performances. During this week, the performance, which was created in response to the primary site, was performed in front of an audience, first at its original site and then in the secondary site. As part of this practical study, empirical data of the rehearsal process and performances was collected in the form of questionnaires, video recordings of performances, and voice recordings.

### **1.5 Delineation**

As stated previously, the focus of this study aims to investigate a personalised site-specific approach to performance, addressing selected origins, possible influences and practical implications of a site-specific approach. As a mini thesis, the scope of the study had to be considered when investigating the origins and influences. The selected origins in the theoretical study aimed to show the multiplicity and motive of the build up towards site-specific performance in the visual arts and performing arts. Even though I am aware of the different socio-political circumstances that gave rise to certain shifts in paradigm within these origins, this will not be focused on as it is beyond the scope of a mini thesis. Due to the multiplicity of existing approaches to site-specific performance, the study has been framed from the perspectives of a selection of practitioners.

In my preliminary study it was seen that information became more readily available on international practitioners, rather than those based in South Africa. Interested in the origins of this approach, and receiving direct contact from site-specific practitioners Wilkie and Koplowitz, it was decided to focus on the origins of site-specific performance from a European/American standpoint. Selecting European and American directors based on their unconventional use of space and other possible influences contributing towards the development of a site-specific approach to performance, this theoretical study became an academic discourse that would be used to enlighten my practical process. Importantly, whilst navigating through the selection of visual artists and performing artists in this study one should not think of this study as linear, but rather a study aiming to show the diversity of a selection of possible origins and European influences relating to site-specific performance.

Interested in localising the site-specific approach within the Western Cape, in order to see how it is currently being used by practitioners, three directors were selected, that being Hanekom, Coetzer and Prigge-Pienaar. Selected based on their individual approaches to site-based performance, these are three of the many practitioners who explore site-based work in the Western Cape and South Africa as a whole. Interested in investigating a personalised site-specific approach, Hanekom was selected because of her word, or scripted

site-based work, Coetzer because of her use of site-specific dance in Cape Town city centre, and Prigge-Pienaar because she was the first practitioner to introduce me to the concept of site-specific performance in 2010.

Once again the scope of the mini thesis did not allow me to look at both Europe/America and South Africa equally. In light of this, South African practitioners who can be seen as foundational to the development of site-specific performance, whilst not mentioned in the study, are Steven Cohen<sup>10</sup>; Brett Bailey<sup>11</sup> and Anthea Moys<sup>12</sup>. Aware of the political connotations that many of these South African and European/American practitioners draw on with regard to space, my engagement with site is primarily architectural rather than philosophical, historical or socio-political.

The implications of following a Practice-based research design are that the practical study becomes the focus of the thesis, influencing the study as a whole. The strong focus on the architectural elements of the site in the praxis rather than that of the socio-political also influenced the selection of visual artists and spatial directors in the theoretical study. This is not to say that all the practitioners selected for this study solely concentrate on the architectural elements in the development of their site-based work. Boal, for instance, shows direct interest in the underlying socio-political consequences of a site as the basis of his work, however for the purpose of this study, this did not form the focus.

## **1.6 Chapter layout**

This introductory chapter serves as motivation for my choice of research subject. It aims to orientate the reader with regard to the problem statement and research questions of the study. It also provides an overview of the chosen methodology and research design.

Focusing initially on the pre-1960 artists involved in Dadaism, abstract expressionism and minimalism, Chapter 2 aims to highlight the selected pioneering figures from whom a site-specific approach originated. Rejecting all sense of tradition, the artists involved removed the paintbrush, easel and canvas from their vocabulary, replacing them with human bodies, objects and exceptionally large surface areas. Looking to expand beyond the confinements of the gallery, artists involved in performance art, happenings, land art and

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<sup>10</sup> Born in South Africa in 1962, Cohen (2012) currently resides in Lille, France. Covering both categories, that being Performance art and Site-specific performance, Cohen is interested in staging public interventions in unconventional spaces as well as in theatres and galleries. Paying attention to that which is usually marginalised in society, aspects which are focused on in Cohen's work are usually close to his own experience of being a gay, white, Jewish South African Man. Cohen's best known performance is that of Chandelier which was performed in 2001 and 2002.

<sup>11</sup> South African born playwright, designer, director and festival curator, Brett Bailey (2012) is a practitioner that has not only created work throughout Africa but also travelled to the UK and across Europe. Interested in colonial and Post-colonial Africa Bailey's work not only exists in traditional theatres but also explores the potential of alternative spaces such as schools. Performances that best resonate with Bailey's interests are Big Dada, Ipi Zombi, Imambo Jumbo and the art exhibition Exhibit A.

<sup>12</sup> As the current winner of the 2013 Standard Bank Young Artists Award, Anthea Moys (2012) is taking performance art as well as Site-specific work publically. Interested in using play techniques in performance, Moys intends for her work to foster connections between different communities and spaces in which they inhabit. Using public spaces, Moys attempts to make art accessible to all different kinds of people, sometimes involving them in the work itself or letting them simply be bystanders. Frustrated with galleries Moys has escaped the confinements of the traditional four walls in search for a new audience as well as a new way of experiencing and making art.



street theatre became interested in the potential of alternative performance spaces, particularly with regard to the specificity of individual spaces.

Since I am interested in furthering the discussion on space, special attention will firstly be focused on space in performance in Chapter 3. Brook, Artaud, Grotowski, Schechner, Malina and Beck were identified as leading practitioners in this regard, as their contributions on space could be seen to have a direct influence on a site-specific approach to performance. Recognising that site-specific performance exists as a sub-part of a greater category labelled site-based performance, this chapter secondly aims to clarify and/or identify possible characteristics of the different sub-categories.

Chapter 4 reflects on the process and findings of the practical project, specifically with regard to the position of the director in a site-specific approach; the purpose of a site-specific approach to performance; the implications of moving the final performance to a secondary site; and identifying possible characteristics for a personalised approach to a site-specific performance .

The last chapter of this thesis will begin with a brief summary of the study, after which final conclusions will be discussed. Suggestions for possible further research will conclude the study.

## **Chapter 2: Abandoning the gallery and taking to the streets: Encountering influential avant-garde artists of the 1960s and 1970s**

This chapter will focus on a selection of prominent artists who were seen to challenge the conventional during the 1960s and 1970s by experimenting with a range of approaches in order to revolutionise not only art itself, but the experience of art as well. This chapter aims to illustrate the gradual progression of artists from the gallery to the streets, their incorporation of the spectator, and their overall abolishment of the preconceived and traditional. Prominent artists contributing to this gradual departure from the gallery to the streets were found collected under specific group efforts. Although some groups dealt exclusively with the experience of sculpture in alternative spaces, whilst others became more interested in the actual performance aspect, each in some way contributed to the re-evaluation of art and performance in unorthodox spaces. Discussing their individual approaches hopefully will provide insight into the diverse nature of the influences from which a site-specific approach to performance can draw.

Touching on three preliminary styles – Dadaism, abstract expressionism and minimalism – I aim to provide an appropriate foundation upon which to begin my greater discussion of performance art, happenings, land art and street theatre. Whilst I recognise the importance of a historic account, I do not aim to provide a linear trajectory in this chapter, but rather to point out the influential ideas and characteristics of these styles that possibly influenced a site-specific approach to performance. Even though I am aware that the particular socio-political circumstances that gave rise to certain shifts in paradigm differ between these movements, they are not the focus of my discussion - see 1.5 delineation of study.

### **2.1 Introductory artists and their pre-1960 contributions**

#### **2.1.1 Dadaism**

Rejecting the traditional galleries and the work usually occupying them, Dadaists such as Duchamp placed a considerable amount of importance on “taking a physical leave of absence from their work’s making” (Kitnick 2002:100). Instead of focusing on themselves as art makers, Dadaists’ ultimate concern was to challenge authorities’ perspectives on the purpose of art. Often “discussed in terms of absurdity, nonsense, and anti-art” (Dickerman 1964:1), it was through the Dadaists’ rebellion against all that was conventionally accepted that they were ultimately able to challenge figures of authority. Emerging during World War I, Dadaists, through their work, established a definite scepticism about the accepted values governing their society. Never officially accepting the term “Dadaism”, these artists rejected the idea of becoming a unified group. Whilst their work incorporated definite differences, similarities could be found in their interest in “montage, assemblage, readymades (sic), chance, performance and media pranks” (Dickerman 1964: IX). Of course, many artists contributed to the establishment of this form, but it is the work of Duchamp that included many of the characteristics present in abstract expressionism, minimalism and land art. These art movements influenced by Dadaism can in turn be seen as influencing site-specific performance. Highlighting specific elements explored in Dadaism will help to define the extent to which Dadaism can be seen as

influential on these movements . One specific image that has become iconic of Dadaism and Duchamp is the irrefutable readymade *Fountain*<sup>13</sup>:

[It] was a urinal, the kind of urinal that, when installed in a public bathroom, can only be used by standing urinating men... Duchamp had brought the urinal and simply placed it on its flat side so that it would stand “erect”. He signed the base, right next to the hole for plumbing: R Mutt (Mink 2004:63).

Duchamp’s readymades became indicative of the revolt against conventional artworks. Duchamp’s selection of common objects “often shook the art world by exhibiting them, often physically unaltered except for the appearance of the artist’s signature” (Goldsmith 1983:197). For most, the intellectual ideas imprinted in the purpose of Duchamp’s readymades were said to be too advanced, although too shocking perhaps would better suit the response of the viewers. Later, this use of readymades would be adopted by performance art practitioner Manzoni<sup>14</sup>. Duchamp’s collection, however, was not made up exclusively of readymades. Another piece that formed part of his collection and that influenced abstract expressionism was a small piece created in 1946, titled *Wayward Landscape*<sup>15</sup>: “At first glance it appears to be an abstract painting. In fact it is a large semen stain on funeral black satin” (Hopkins 2000:38).

By replacing the ordinary canvas and oil paints with alternatives, and by rejecting realistic representation, Duchamp adopted a more expressive brushstroke that would become as familiar as that used by Pollock and his contemporaries. Thus, by experimenting with different materials, Duchamp began to pre-empt the movement towards a different method of creation, one that would become known as abstract expressionism.

### **2.1.2 Abstract expressionism: Jackson Pollock and action painting**

At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act – rather than a space in which to reproduce, redesign, analyse or ‘express’ an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event (Rosenberg 1952:22).

In 1951, the term “action painting”<sup>16</sup> was coined by American writer Harold Rosenberg to describe the first art movement of American artists since the end of the Second World War. Although often described as second hand, drawing specifically from Picasso and Matisse, the freedom found in the dripping technique used in abstract expressionism expressed a new-found liberation for painters. Many artists exploring this technique individualised their approaches to the canvas and the treatment of paint. As different as their approaches might have been, there are specific similarities that tie the work of these artists together, especially their freedom of paint application, expressiveness and rejection of the formal. For the first time

<sup>13</sup> See Image 1 in Addendum A.

<sup>14</sup> See Section 2.2.1 for a more detailed discussion of performance art and the contribution of Manzoni.

<sup>15</sup> See Image 2 in Addendum A.

<sup>16</sup> Most secondary and tertiary sources use the terms “Abstract expressionism” and “Action painting” interchangeably, as can be seen in Hunter and Jacobus (1923:231). To my understanding, and in order to distinguish between these two terms, “Abstract expressionism” will be used when referring to the overall movement, and “Action painting” will be used in relation to the specific style, for example Pollock’s drip technique.

since the Great Depression and the Second World War, artists were not faced with representing social themes, but were confronted with an expressive technique, abstract in form and fuelled by “intense personal emotion” (Hunter & Jacobus 1973:231).

Although German painter Hans Hofman was the “first to evolve and experiment with a free version of Action painting” (Hunter & Jacobus 1973:234), it was not until American painter Jackson Pollock explored this technique further that it began to establish itself in the painting community. In 1946 and 1947, Pollock’s interest in dipping and pouring “fluid enamel, aluminium, and oil paint from sticks and hardened brushes over pieces of sized, unprimed canvas” separated him from the traditional techniques being taught at the time (Frank 1983:63). Pollock was not interested in the construction and placement of conventional images; rather, his work explored the unconscious, using “rhythmic repetitions of tossed paint” which would “flow, bite, sear, and bleed, never turning into a pattern or decoration” (Frank 1983:66). Specific examples of Pollock’s work illustrating this distinct expressive technique are *Lavender Mist*<sup>17</sup> and *Autumn Rhythm*<sup>18</sup>.

However, misunderstandings of Pollock’s work led critics to describe Pollock’s “pouring method as *drooling*” (Frank 1983:75), as well as “unmeaning ‘chaos’” (Frank 1983:79). Responding to these accusations, theoretician Rosenberg attempted to defend Pollock’s work by developing “a shift in conceptions about the ontology of the post-war artwork by approaching abstract expressionist works in terms of an *event*” (Butt 2006:22). Referring to work by Pollock and his contemporaries<sup>19</sup> as events, Rosenberg began to draw attention to the action of the painting, the process by which the end product was created, rather than simply the aesthetic appeal of the end result. Substantiating this, producer Paul Falkenberg and photographer Hans Namuth created a short film documenting Pollock’s working methods. Documenting Pollock in his organic process of creation, Falkenberg and Namuth were able to provide evidence of this “controlled accident”<sup>20</sup>, which many had misinterpreted as “chaos” (Butt 2006:23). Along with this, Pollock was able to draw attention to the artist not simply as a maker, but also as a type of “virtuoso performer” (Hunter & Jacobus 1973:234). However, not only had the role of the artist changed, as Kaprow (in Frank 1983:85) suggests, but the role of the gallery began to shift. This shift would finally take place not only in happenings, but in most of the work created during the 1960s:

The expanding scale of Pollock’s works, their iterative configurations prompting the marvellous thought that they could go on forever in any direction including out, soon made the gallery as useless as the canvas, and choices of wider and wider fields of environmental reference followed (Kaprow in Frank 1983:85).

Growing tired of the action paintings populating the galleries, artists began to see “the need for a new vocabulary that could contend with this austere abstraction” (Meyer 2000:17). Although never formally

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<sup>17</sup> See Image 3 in Addendum A.

<sup>18</sup> See Image 4 in Addendum A.

<sup>19</sup> These contemporaries include Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Arshile Gorky, William Baziotes, Philip Guston, Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb.

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Frank (1983:23) refers to this controlled action as “the spontaneous application of paint”.

defined, minimalism became the term to label alternative artists of the early 1960s, who were based primarily in New York and Los Angeles.

### **2.1.3 Minimalism**

Minimalists, as with most avant-garde collectives challenging the conventional during the 1950s, were not restricted to purely artists. Rather, collectives could be seen made up of dancers, musicians, critics, theatre practitioners, painters as well as sculptors. As a result of this, theoreticians were challenged to define a term that encapsulated the essence of these multidisciplinary contributions. One specific attempt to clarify this was made by Meyer (2000:15):

Primarily sculpture, Minimalist art tends to consist of single or repeated geometric forms. Industrially produced or built by skilled workers following the artist's instructions, it removes any trace of emotion of intuitive Expressionist painting and sculpture that preceded it during the 1940's and 1950's... Minimal work does not allude to anything beyond its literal presence, or its existence in the physical world... Often placed on walls, in corners, or directly on the floor, it is an actual place, rendering the viewer conscious of moving through this space.

Two important details that Meyer emphasises here are, firstly, the minimalist's rejection of all that was expressionistic and, secondly, the conscious effort to create work with which the audience interacts. As influential as minimalism would become, critics such as Greenberg (in Hopkins 2000:143) disparaged minimalism "for being too gratuitously 'far-out' and intellectualized, no more readable as art as a door, a table, a sheet of paper". Despite the negativity that surrounded the minimalists' endeavours, there seemed to be no denying that artists who contributed to this far-out form encouraged others to explore it further too. One of the first artists to make waves exploring the characteristics of minimalism was Carl Andre, in his piece *Equivalent VIII*<sup>21</sup>. Exhibited in New York at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, Andre arranged 120 fire bricks in a solid rectangle on the gallery floor (Meyer 2000:36). The arrangement of these readymade materials in a simple formation infuriated regular gallery goers, resulting in minimalism becoming synonymous with "an excessive formal reduction, an appalling simplicity... [and] a deficiency of artistic labour" (Meyer 2000:18).

Unlike abstract expressionism, the potential of the work was meant to be measured by the spectator's ability to find appeal in the recognition of the formal features of the sculpture, its mass, weight and scale, and not its expressiveness. However, viewers accustomed to the immediate experience of work classified as expressionism found the subdued simplification of minimalism to be too intellectual, resulting in work becoming thought of as elitist (Hopkins 2000:143). Andre attempted to break this elitist illusion by creating work specifically designed for audience participation<sup>22</sup>. Arranging work on the floor, Andre attempted to entice viewers to walk between the sculptures, fully able to experience their formal features in space and time (Meyer 2000:98).

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<sup>21</sup> See Image 5 in Addendum A.

<sup>22</sup> This includes *Steel Square* and *Hot-rolled Steel*. See Images 6(a), 6(b) in Addendum A.

Another minimalist practitioner working directly against abstract expressionism, although more involved in performance, was Yvonne Rainer. Working as a prominent figure at the Judson Dance Theatre, Rainer's principle ideas strongly related to those being addressed in minimalist art. Similarities included stripping the body to the bare essentials and focusing on form rather than aesthetics, characteristics synonymous with minimalist art. However, unlike artists, Rainer was not as concerned with drawing attention to the object in space as she was with the neutralising of the actual body in performance. In order to accomplish this, Rainer focused on ordinary movement, such as walking, which emphasised her complete break from the traditional grandeur usually associated with choreography. In doing so, Rainer (in Spivey 2004:120) declared the following about minimalist dance:

No to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformation and magic and make-believe no to the glamour and transcendancy (sic) of the star image no to the heroic no to the anti-heroic no to trash imagery no to involvement of performer or spectator no to style no to camp no to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer no to eccentricity no to moving or being moved.

Many of Rainer's intentions deviate from those of future practitioners, especially with regard to audience inclusion. However, important characteristics that Rainer's influence would pass on to other forms such as performance art, happenings, land art, street art and later site-specific performance would be that of her inclusion of the daily. Incorporating daily gestures and movements drew attention to that which was not characteristically performance. Future practitioners would be seen experimenting with similar interests as a means to draw attention to daily life and, in turn, to blur the boundary between performance and reality.

## **2.2 Breaking Boundaries: Artists in motion**

Artists emerging during the 1960s, especially those concerned with the development of performance art, happenings, land art and street theatre, drew from artists such as – Duchamp, Pollock, Andre and Rainer. Although many artists contributed throughout the 1950s, these specific artists could be seen to be directly interested in elements influential in the construction of site-based work. Characteristics specific to the 1950s, which infiltrated the 1960s (as highlighted in the previous section), were Pollock's transition towards performance, the inclusion of the daily, and the development of art/performance outside the gallery.

Rejecting the conventional, artists worked in isolation, further developing techniques by incorporating features from all artistic disciplines to combine theatre, art and music. Disregarding boundaries, artists encouraged audience participation, emphasising the physical experience instead of absolute aestheticism. Although they were at that time thought of as vulgar, paying unnecessary attention to nudity and crassness, the practitioners devoted to the 1960's development of art and performance intended to dig deep into society, infecting real life, real spaces and real issues. By briefly discussing performance art, happenings, land art and street theatre, this section aims to provide an overview of how practitioners gradually developed away from the gallery whilst incorporating elements of Dadaism, abstract expressionism and minimalism.

### **2.2.1 Performance art**

Performance has been considered as a way of bringing to life the many formal and conceptual ideas on which the making of art is based. Live gestures have constantly been used as a weapon against the conventions of established art (Goldberg 1979:6).

As the avant-garde artists of the 1950s began to break away from the traditional galleries by exploring alternative techniques and spaces, there was a definite increase in the interest in performance in art. Directly influenced by Pollock's curiosity with the real experience of the action of painting, and disregarding the actual end product, performance art can possibly be seen as having become the pivotal point for further avant-garde development during the mid-1960s and 1970s. Another term describing the efforts of those contributing towards this approach was live art, as there was a considerable amount of importance placed on the actual event itself. Many theorists became interested in the attempt to document these live events in order to preserve their fleetingness, but the countless theories on the development of this approach became futile, as artists did not remain consistent whilst creating performances. Nevertheless, Green (1999:6) attempts to clarify these discrepancies by providing a brief outline of the characteristics found to be similar in performance art events:

First, performance art incorporates a variety of forms, such as film, video, dance, poetry, narrative, music, and movement. Second, the importance afforded the performance art process usually outweighs that of the product. In this sense, performance art resists commodification. Third, performance art blurs the line between art and life by including everyday actions such as brushing one's teeth, chopping vegetables, or watching television as possible metaphors to express, for example, boredom or ennui.

Emphasising the daily, whilst rejecting the rational and linear structures of conventional performance, these artists developed a distinct defiance against the traditionally accepted forms of both art and performance. Moving out of galleries and theatres, replacing paintbrushes with bodies, and at times incorporating explicit nudity and crassness, these artists were not interested in subdued viewers. The performances pushed boundaries, and challenged the preconceived ideas and accepted notions of society. In this way, performance art practitioners expanded on the core elements already under investigation in abstract expressionism, Dadaism, and minimalism. Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni and Carolee Schneemann can be said to have played a central role in this specific development, especially with regard to the performance aspect of the form (Duchy 2006). As different as these approaches may be, by drawing specifically on the work created by these selected artists I will strive to illustrate the magnitude of this all-inclusive style.

As the precursor, Klein's *Anthropometries*<sup>23</sup> portrays the primary interests centralised in the initial performance art works. Replacing the paintbrush with the naked bodies of women, ordering them to dip their bodies in paint and then to apply them spontaneously to an empty canvas, Klein became more of a conductor

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<sup>23</sup> Image 7 in Addendum A is a black and white photograph of the first public exhibition of Klein's work on 9 March 1960.



than a painter in the traditional sense. Klein's documentation of *Anthropometries* better substantiates his approach:

At my direction, the flesh itself applied the colour to the surface, and with perfect exactness. I could continue to maintain a precise distance from my creation and still dominate its execution. In this way, I stayed clean. I no longer dirtied myself with color (sic), not even the tips of my fingers. The work finished itself there in front of me with the complete collaboration of the model. And I could salute its birth into the tangible world (Klein in Jones 1998:88).

Two characteristic elements that began to define Klein's specific approach were his use of the body as a creative tool, and the role of the audience. In the black and white photograph<sup>24</sup> taken at Robert Godet's apartment in Paris in 1958, a clear indication of these specific characteristics is documented (Vergine 2000:94). Relying on the audience's presence, Klein's work became less about the final product and more about the actual physical experience of its creation. Finally, by insisting that the actual act of painting was in fact the artwork itself (Jones 1998:87), Klein was able to complete the transition from visual art to performance art first introduced by Pollock.

Whilst Klein became known for his "living paintbrushes" (Vergine 2000:94), drawing the attention to the physical body in art, another artist interested in the potential of the body was Piero Manzoni. Using the body not as a tool to create art, but rather as the art piece itself, Manzoni could be seen creating living sculptures. These living sculptures would be issued "certificate[s] of authenticity" (Vergine 2000:96), which certified that model 'X' had been signed by the artist and that 'X' would be a work of art from that point onwards.

The certificate was in each case marked by a coloured stamp, indicating the designated area of artwork: red indicated that the person was a complete work of art and would remain so until death; yellow that only that part of the body signed would qualify as art; green imposed a condition and limitation on the attitude or pose involved (sleeping, singing, drinking, talking and so on); and mauve had same function as red, except that it had been obtained by payment (Goldberg 1979:96).

*Living Sculpture*<sup>25</sup> is a single example of the nature of Manzoni's work. Exhibited in Milan in 1961, Manzoni was found during the exhibition signing multiple individuals, instantaneously transforming models into "living sculptures" (Vergine 2000:95). This instantaneousness that is evident in Manzoni's work not only is reminiscent of Duchamp, but also draws our attention to the instant gratification that society often becomes accustomed to. Borderline controversial, performance art functioned in two ways, the first being "a wake-up call to broaden society's perceptions of what art is and [secondly] as a testing ground for avant-garde conceptions" (Green 1999:7).

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<sup>24</sup> See Image 8 in Addendum A.

<sup>25</sup> See Image 9 in Addendum A.



Carolee Schneemann is another performance art practitioner interested in the inclusion of the body in art and performance. Predominantly explicit in her work, Schneemann is seen using the female body in an entirely different way to that of the two former practitioners. Incorporating her own body in the performance of *Interior Scroll*<sup>26</sup>, Schneemann reintroduces the artist's presence into the actual creation of the piece:

Her face and body covered in strokes of paint, Schneemann pulled a long, thin coil of paper from her vagina...unrolling it to read a narrative text to the audience. Part of this text read as follows: "I met a happy man, / a structuralist filmmaker...he said we are proud of you / you are charming / but don't ask us / to look at your films / ... we cannot look at / *the personal clutter / the persistent feeling/ the hand touch sensibility* (Jones 1998:3).

Working against the "Art Stud Club" (Jones 1998:3), which, as seen in the work of Klein and Manzoni, was using the female body in a position of objectification, Schneemann attempted to challenge the position of the female nude in art and performance. Instead of transforming the body into a tool or certified object, Schneemann distinctly draws attention to the physicality of the actual female body. Accepting and challenging the male gaze, Schneemann is able to confront the numerous male artists who transformed the female body into an aspect of their greater creation. Although using the nude body appears consistently throughout this early development of performance art, it should not be misunderstood for a publicity stunt, but rather seen as artists incorporating the body into their designs as they became interested in the "body as material for art" (Goldberg 1979:7). However, not all performance artists were interested in examining the female nude, nor were they interested in using the body as a tool for artistic creation.

Kaprow focused primarily on the inclusion of ordinary subject matter in performance, drawing specifically from minimalism. In *Another spit piece*, Kaprow drew attention to this interest by creating a performance centred on him cleaning his kitchen floor with an ear bud (Q-tip) and spit. Whilst Kaprow examines the bits of debris left on his kitchen floor, an intimate audience was invited to experience this monotonous performance along with him. As meaningless as this may seem, Kaprow's interest in space and ordinary actions as a form of performance can be seen as the foundation upon which many of his later happenings would be based.

### **2.2.2 Happenings**

Happenings might be described as *a purposefully composed form of theatre in which diverse alogical elements, including nonmatrixed performing, are organized in a compartmented structure* (Kirby 1995:11).

In an attempt to provide a preliminary understanding to the term happenings, I risk, like numerous other theorists, the incorporation of a definition that might provide exclusive parameters to the form. Unlike other forms, happenings did not rely on exclusivity; instead, they resisted any type of definition that might assume that the actions were part of some unified conglomerate. The relevance of including a definition like Kirby's

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<sup>26</sup> See Image 10 in Addendum A.

lies in the attention given to the actual structural formation of a happening, rather than the aesthetics. Looking at three different approaches to creating happenings, I will strive to illustrate how vast the aesthetic desires of this form are, whilst concluding that the primary element linking the approaches together is their alogical structure. Other elements central to this collection of work are found in the artists' approach to space, audience transformation and the inclusion of the chance method. Practitioners known for their contribution to happenings include John Cage, Allan Kaprow and Claes Oldenburg.

Often thought of as having “in common a physical crudeness and roughness” (Kirby 1995:3), happenings were regularly misunderstood for work that required little training, rehearsal or purpose. Accusations such as the above, although misinformed, came predominantly as a response to the practitioner's decision to reject everything remotely connected to the proscenium arch.

Happenings have abandoned the plot or story structure that is the foundation of our traditional theatre. Gone are the clichés of exposition, development, climax, and conclusion... Gone are all the elements needed for the presentation of a cause-and-effect plot or even the simple sequence of events that would tell a story (Kirby 1995:4).

Thus, by abandoning the traditionally accepted dramatic structure, practitioners interested in happenings adopted an alogical non-matrix design. Unlike traditional dramas, which would either follow a logical or illogical structure, happenings were not concerned with audiences following a formation of events to a decisive conclusion. Instead, happenings placed audiences in situations where there was “no relevant framework of reason to which impressions may be referred”, encouraging them to draw their own conclusion from a completely ambiguous situation (Sandford 1995:10). An example illustrating an alogical non-matrixed performance is found in Kirby's circus analogy (Sandford 1995:30).

In a circus, those who take on the role of performer are usually the jugglers, acrobats, assistants and animal trainers. However, unlike traditional performances, those involved in these specific acts are not seen taking on a specific role or character, but rather “[carrying] out their activities” in the form of tricks and other planned actions (Sandford 1995:30). The same can be said for the construction of the circus performance. Instead of following a narrative, circus performances are made up of separate acts that, although they are entertaining, add no meaning or informational structure to one another. Oldenburg's happening, *Washes*<sup>27</sup>, provides a clearer indication of this particular structure in practice.

In Oldenburg's script, documenting the occurrences of *Washes*, there are distinct parameters put into place in order to control the actions of each “compartment structure” (Sandford 1995:10). This written script immediately falsifies claims that happenings were simply improvised (Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:8). Rather, Oldenburg allowed for a level of spontaneity in the performance, ensuring that each performance was unique and unrepeatable. An example of these instructions given to the performers with regard to their specific

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<sup>27</sup> A complete script of Oldenburg's *Washes* has been included in Addendum B.

actions would be: “They wrestle in the water entangling themselves in the parachute. As they wrestle, they laugh, pausing from time to time to spread the chute in the green water” (Sandford 1995:115).

To clarify further, whilst performers were encouraged to explore different opportunities in their set parameters, Oldenburg had complete control over the length of time they had to explore these. Using lighting signals, Oldenburg could control the length of each part, cueing the performers when a part would start and another end. To ensure that the different parts making up a happening fitted into a complete alogical design, artists adopted a new process by which they could order the different parts and this process became known as the chance method (Sandford 1995:38).

Originally adopted from the *I Ching*, the *Chinese book of changes*, the chance method was described as a “tactic, where dice might be thrown or a coin might be tossed to determine the order, spacing, or number of dancers [or performers] on stage” (Sandford 1995:9). Interested in the automatic responses that this technique encouraged, composer John Cage included this technique increasingly into his work. Using this near chance formula, Cage would determine “the placement of notes in certain compositions by marking the imperfections in the score paper” (Kirby 1995:38). A popular example of Cage’s practical incorporation of this method is seen in his production *4’33’’*, in which he broke all traditions by presenting a musical performance that involved no instrumental sounds.

*4’33’’* consisted of a full, traditional orchestra positioned on stage. When the performance was signalled to begin, the performers raised their instruments in the appropriate position and remained in that position for “four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence” (Kirby 1995:38). Not a single note escaped the instruments; instead, Cage drew attention to the everyday sounds found in the expectant silence of the audience. By drawing attention to the natural sounds, which Cage termed “incidental” – made up of the “traffic noises ... crickets... the creak of seats, coughing and whispering in the audience” – Cage ensured original performances every night. Unable to repeat performances, Cage became enthralled by the organic nature of the musical score, acknowledging that its beauty lay in the fleeting, lifelike experience of the moment (Kirby 1995:38). Many happening artists agreed with this idea that a happening should be performed only once and never repeated, including Kaprow (1995:239):

Happenings should be performed once only... yet many of the Happenings have, in fact, been given four or five times, ostensibly to accommodate larger attendances, but this, I believe, was only a realization of the wish to hold onto theatrical customs.

Abandoning these “theatrical customs” enabled practitioners also to abandon the constrictive conventions usually tied to theatre and theatre buildings. One outcome of this rejection of the traditional theatre was the ability of happenings to engage with alternative spaces. In *Washes*, Oldenburg replaces the traditional stage with a pool situated in the basement of the Riverside Plaza Hotel (Sandford 1995:112). Here, Oldenburg occupies more of a private space<sup>28</sup>; however, other practitioners, such as Kaprow, incorporated public spaces

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 3, 3.1.1 *Negotiating space and site*, for a more detailed discussion of space.

into their happenings. *Self Service*<sup>29</sup> is a specific example of Kaprow's use of public spaces. One of the several parts of this happening was performed on a "shoulder stretch of a highway" (Sandford 1995:230). The universality of the space allows for the happening to occur in a number of places, without it becoming too specific. Even though Kaprow's opinion on the use of space is general, the importance he places on those participating in the happening is not. Unlike other happening practitioners, Kaprow does not necessarily cast professional performers, but rather invests in an accidental audience to take part<sup>30</sup>.

This elimination of the performer can be seen as the final tactic used in an attempt to draw happenings closer to the actuality of daily life. By removing the artificial performer, and replacing it with those who came across the setup of the happening by chance, Kaprow transformed the accidental audience into participants. Through this transformation of the audience, Kaprow and other happening practitioners challenged the accepted passivity of the audiences taking up seats in the traditional theatres. Instead of passively accepting a performance, the practitioners challenged the audience to question the act, experience it fully and respond in a natural way. Similarly, by removing the seated audience, both Kaprow and Oldenburg emphasised the importance of the audience's ability to choose how to see a situation, if they choose to see it at all. Assuring fluidity in happenings, by removing the division between performers and audience, further broke down the parameters set up by the traditional use of the fourth wall<sup>31</sup>. Happenings permeated the two worlds, leaking the theatre world into the real world, which later could be seen as having an impact on a site-specific approach to performance.

Consequently, the multiple characteristics defining happenings can be seen to coincide with those investigated in site-specific performance, especially with regard to unconventional audiences, alternative performance spaces and the use of the chance method. In line with this, happening artists also introduced a level of concern for the life span of their works. Kaprow insisted on the fleetingness of happenings, with the idea of them only being performed once. Site-specific performances, on the other hand, incorporate the essence of the chance method as a way to extend the longevity of the performances, by opening up the performances to the unplanned occurrences of the site, allowing each performance to be unrepeatable<sup>32</sup>. With the unrepeatable nature that is present in both happenings and site-specific performances comes the question of documentation. Exploring this, and developing techniques specifically aimed at the documentation of such perishable work, is land artist Richard Long.

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<sup>29</sup> The complete script of this Happening is included in Addendum B.

<sup>30</sup> The primary function of abandoning the professional performer rests ultimately in the purpose of the performer in the two different types of performances. In the more traditional performance, actors are in charge of the suspension of disbelief of the audience, achieving this by immersing themselves fully in a certain time, place and character specific to a script. In contrast, happening artists argue that, "while the knowledge of the scheme is necessary, professional talent is not; the situations in a Happening are lifelike or, if they are unusual, are so rudimentary that professionalism is actually uncalled for" (Kaprow 1995:240).

<sup>31</sup> The fourth wall is a theatre term that philosopher and critic Denis Diderot introduced into the theatre discourse during the 19<sup>th</sup> century- particularly with regards to Realism. In short, this term refers to the imaginary wall at the front of the stage in a traditional Proscenium arch theatre. This wall is usually not broken by the performers, in Realism plays, and the audience is allowed to see through it as if they were peeping into a "slice of life". Later, performances would "break the forth wall, addressing the audience directly.

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter 3, 3.3 *Site-based performance*, for a more detailed discussion of site-specific performance and its parts.

### **2.2.3 Land art**

Emerging during the late 1960s in a period dominated by theoretical debates concerned with the prominence of abstract expressionism, sculptors in Europe and America were beginning to develop their work in spaces away from the confinements of the gallery. Seeking to expand on Pollock's initial concerns with real experiences, land artists intended to make work that stood "for real life...actual contact...real experiences" (Tufnell 2006:16). Three points of interest central to land art were: (1) the difference in approach found in America and Europe, (2) the problem regarding representation of these colossal works in the gallery and, finally, (3) the transition from sculpture to performance. Whilst there is a vast amount of theory surrounding the problem of representing land art in galleries, for the purpose of this study the focus will be placed on the actual treatment of the landscape, which would later influence site-specific performance. Similar to other movements established in the 1960s, proponents of land art were also disinterested in manifestos and memberships, each negotiating with the form differently. Leading practitioners best illustrating these differences are European artists Robert Smithson and Richard Long, and American artists Michael Heizer and Dennis Oppenheim.

A label to describe this body of work has been under constant negotiation for a number of years. Alternatives include "earthworks", "earth art", "environmental art", "eco-art", and later "site-specific art" (Land art 2012), but artists continued to reject labels specifically used to describe their efforts. This reaction came primarily in an effort to protect their work from becoming historically specific<sup>33</sup>. Rejecting manifestos and memberships, these artists approached alternative places of creation in individual ways, resulting in very few elements becoming constant characteristics of the form. The single characteristic that is found in all the works documented is of course the intense desire of the artists to engage in complete dialogue with their chosen environments. These artists were not only interested in creating a visual replication of their experience away from the gallery, but a practical representation as well. Echoing similar objectives as those established by happenings, land art began to play

... an extremely important role in the undoing or opening up of the relationship between the artist and the gallery and by implication the economic structures of the gallery and museum system. By working outside the gallery, in the landscape, by making works that could not (in theory) be sold, or in some cases, be exhibited, and by this initiating a critique of the role of the gallery or museum institution, artists such as Smithson are said to have forged a new model for the artist, and in expanding the means and areas in which the artist might operate (Tufnell 2006:17).

This is not to say that all artists abandoned the gallery completely. For the most part, works falling under land art were far too large and permanent to move to galleries. Other problematic features concerning the creation of land art were connected to its exotic distance, as many works were created in isolation, inhabiting destinations difficult to reach, resulting in very few people actually experiencing them (Hunter & Jacobus

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<sup>33</sup> By referring to 'historically specific' I am ultimately acknowledging the artists' intentions to create work that would remain universal, rather than tied to the specific time in which they were created.

1973:454). Robert Smithson was the primary European artist contributing towards the documentation of land art in galleries, and the implications of documenting such work in the gallery. Most of Smithson's theories centred on his most acclaimed work, *Spiral jetty*<sup>34</sup> (Tufnell 2006:41). Pivotal to Smithson's discussion of this work, and used to theoretically document land art, were the development of the two terms *site* and *nonsite*:

The *Site* is the original unique place in the landscape, while the *Nonsite* is Smithson's presentation of a form of analogue or equivalent, often comprising [of] actual geological material, maps, mirrors and texts, in the gallery space (Tufnell 2006:29).

Incorporating elements of the actual site in the gallery, Smithson attempted to provide tactile evidence, which would produce a visceral response in those experiencing it (Tufnell 2006:29). Doing this, Smithson was able to refer to the original site, without replicating the work in the gallery, providing an archaeologist's approach to the site. This allowed Smithson to refer to the original work without actually moving it. Unlike Smithson's approach, Long did not form gallery representations assembled out of bits of the original site, nor did his representations focus purely on sampling the experience of the art piece. Instead, Long invested in two works, one designed in and for a specific environment, and another for the gallery (Tufnell 2006:20). An important detail differentiating Long's approach from Smithson's lies primarily in the permanency of the work. Where Smithson's land art is built to exist over an indeterminate span of time, most of Long's work exists for a moment before returning back to its natural formation (Furlong 2010:67).

Explicitly simple, Long's designs emphasise the straightforwardness of his creations. By focussing on walking and basic shapes such as circles, straight lines and spirals, Long created land art that continuously emphasised non-permanency. Promoting a non-intrusive approach to the landscape, Tufnell (2006:31) goes on to describe Long's approach as being "somewhere between the making [of] monuments and the leaving of nothing but footprints". These works became known as Long's "invisible works" (Tufnell 2006:23). A specific example illustrating the nature of Long's invisible works is seen in *A Line made by walking*<sup>35</sup>:

The artist simply walked up and down along a line across a field, until his footprints had worn a visible path in the grass. The path was then photographed. It is thus as if the work were split into two parts: the making of the work – walking along the line – being the primary element, and the black and white photograph and caption functioning as a kind of residue or souvenir of that particular action made in a particular place on a particular day in 1967 (Tufnell 2006: 23).

Another way that Long documented his invisible art works was through the creation of permanent gallery sculptures. These gallery sculptures would become known as his "visible works". In essence, Long made work belonging to two categories: "Sculpture[s] made on the walks, in the landscape, and documented by photography; and sculpture[s] made in the gallery as a response to space and locality" (Tufnell 2006:27). Specific examples of these two types of sculptures are *A Circle in the Andres*<sup>36</sup>, and its gallery counterpart

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<sup>34</sup> See Image 11 in Addendum A.

<sup>35</sup> See Image 12 in Addendum A.

<sup>36</sup> See Image 13 in Addendum A.



*Installation at Galerie*<sup>37</sup>. Of course, similarities can be seen between the two; however, the principle behind this two-fold approach is the possibility for Long to represent his fleeting sculpture without physically recreating it or moving it. Another important element of Long's double creation is that both sculptures are specific, in some way or another, to the space in which they are created<sup>38</sup>. Whilst Long promoted a more sensitive approach to the landscape in Europe, some American land artists were less interested in subtlety, actively transforming the landscape to suit their needs. Long (in Tufnell 2006:15) explained that his approach was the very "antithesis of so-called American Land Art, where the artist needed money to be an artist, to buy real estate, to claim possession of the land and wield machinery".

Mostly located in the South-Western American deserts, artists transformed the desolate areas into sites of reconstruction, bringing in bulldozers to transform the land into their envisioned art works. An example illustrating this active transformation of the landscape can be seen in the work, *Double Negative*<sup>39</sup>, by American artist Michael Heizer. Situated in a remote location and colossal in size, this piece is reminiscent of a mining expedition. Heizer contends with the natural formation of the landscape, removing material from the landscape, actively transforming the existing land into something else (Tufnell 2006:51). Such an approach has caused others to accuse the Americans "of being environmentally insensitive, unduly macho and ever arrogant" (Tufnell 2006: 46). While there are no parameters or boundaries that classify this active approach to land art as wrong, I am specifically interested in artists whose approaches could possibly be seen to influence a site-specific approach to performance. This active transformation of space, however, does not seem relevant to my initial understanding of a site-specific approach.

Dennis Oppenheim – also an American – had a similar approach to that of Long and his non-intrusive walks. He also developed an interest in not only documenting the natural sculptures imprinted on the landscape, but also him experiencing them. By gradually including the body as a prominent feature in land art, Oppenheim eventually was able to initiate a shift in terms of which land art progressively became replaced by the developing concern for body art<sup>40</sup>. In Oppenheim's *Parallel Stress*<sup>41</sup>, created in 1977, evidence of this development towards performance is made clear. Consisting of a 10-minute performance piece, which documents the artist himself experiencing the "stress positions" of the natural sculptures, *Parallel Stress* focused primarily on the body in the space, especially its interaction with the landscape (Tufnell 2006:59). Echoing similar concerns as the process seen in Long's making of *A line made by walking*, Oppenheim (in Tufnell 2006:61) describes his own intentions while working as follows:

The sense of physically spanning land, activating a surface by walking on it, began to interest me. When you compare a piece of sculpture, an object on a pedestal, to walking outdoors for ten

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<sup>37</sup> See Image 14 in Addendum A.

<sup>38</sup> Long's sculptures were made from material from the place in which they were made. Thus, work created in the landscape would consist of stones, grass and bark specific to that place. Similarly, work found in galleries would be made of materials found in quarries (Tufnell 2006:27).

<sup>39</sup> See Image 15 in Addendum A.

<sup>40</sup> "Body art also purported to represent real experience in opposition to the commoditized and mediated experience of institutionalised culture" (Tufnell 2006:67).

<sup>41</sup> See Image 16 in Addendum A.

minutes and still being on top of your work, you find an incredible deference in the degree of physicality and sensory immersion. The idea of the artist literally being in the material, after spending decades manipulating it, appealed to me.

Shifting the focus of art to performance, Oppenheim emphasised his interest in experiencing artwork. Mimicking concerns central to Pollock and Kaprow, Oppenheim's work increasingly developed the land artist's interest in experiencing landscapes. Drawing attention to the specific details of his chosen locations, Oppenheim's performances could be seen incorporating specific architectural characteristics into his designs, creating work that possibly could be termed site-specific.

It is through this final shift to a more performance-based interaction with the environment that the possible influence of land art onsite-specific performance is recognised. Other particularly influential features are the permanency of the location in which these land art works exist. Being created from and in a specific location, the works are not only referred to in connection with their geological positioning, but also the effectiveness of their existence in relationship to their surrounding spaces. Thus, the artist's negotiation of the chosen landscape is a vital component in the creation of such work, as material cannot simply be added to the existing site, but must be drawn from the sources made available in the site itself. This is not to say that one can redesign the site by breaking it down and moulding it to suit a particular idea, as seen in certain American land artists like Heizer. Re-forming a space is ultimately changing the very nature of the space.

#### **2.2.4 Street theatre**

Where the previous three sections focused primarily on attempts in the visual arts to move into the public spaces of society, street theatre is concerned more with initiating a shift towards the importance of the performing arts in non-conventional spaces. By reviewing the continuous development of street theatre throughout history, three issues can be seen placed at its centre: (1) the boundary between life and art, (2) the incorporation of the audience, and (3) the investigation of alternative spaces (Mason 1992). While many variations of this form exist, offering a plethora of different styles, it is the contemporary approaches that best illustrate the influences of street theatre on a site-specific approach to performance. Two specifically influential groups are Augusto Boal's invisible theatre, and the San Francisco Mime Troupe's guerrilla theatre<sup>42</sup>. As different as these approaches are, a definite similarity is found in their interest in reaching accidental audiences<sup>43</sup> through performance. Connected to this interest in the accidental audience is the symbiotic relationship that street performances have with the spaces that they occupy.

Traditionally thought of as performances designated exclusively for the streets, contemporary practitioners have begun to include indoor spaces in their performances as well. By expanding their performance space to include "old churches, warehouses, tents, museums and exhibition halls" (Mason 1992:3), the practitioners

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<sup>42</sup> Although the invisible theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe's work focused on the politics of space, highlighting issues which needed to be acknowledged by the societies in which they were immersed, the focus of my study is not necessarily concerned with the purpose and ideologies behind their work but rather the form and format of their work. See delineation 1.5.

<sup>43</sup> The accidental audience comprises those who are not conventional audiences; they are not predetermined and can be casual pedestrians who become interested in the action coincidentally.



by implication enlarge their accidental audience possibilities. Therefore, by inhabiting different spaces, street theatre performances have become more than just busking, juggling, puppet shows and rallies. Instead, practitioners have become focused on work that will “get amongst [audiences], encircle them, lead them on journeys, play with them, [and] surprise them by appearing in unexpected places” (Mason 1992:12).

Although several approaches to street theatre can be identified, certain characteristics are recognisable within all street theatre performances, especially the rejection of conventional staging. Discarding ordinary lighting, sets, seating and staging, productions are able to remain mobile, thereby encouraging untraditional spatial arrangements between audience members and performers. In promoting this, practitioners are enforcing performance elements that will explore all possible “kinds of interaction with the public” (Mason 1992:11). By avoiding the hindrance of predesigned performance spaces, street theatre thus not only discourages elitism, but promotes the ability to fully immerse the performing arts in real-life events (Mason 1992). Two contemporary approaches exploring this are invisible theatre and guerrilla theatre.

Pioneering invisible theatre, and developing it from a directorial and performers’ point of view, Augusto Boal can be seen as the figurehead of this approach. Placing performances in trains, restaurants and markets, on sidewalks or amongst crowds, Boal was predominantly interested in transforming unexpected audiences into witnesses of his prepared scenes. These chance (or accidental) audiences would be completely unaware of the rehearsed action that Boal would immerse in a populated space. Relying solely on the accidental audience’s reactions to the scenes, Boal would initiate a space where issues could be raised and hopefully confronted by an audience willing to take physical action. Although the performances allowed for freedom with regard to unpredictable audience responses, as Sullivan (1998:121) explains, Boal never encouraged total freedom when compiling and rehearsing a performance. Instead, “the invisible theatre calls for the detailed preparation of a skit with a complete text or a simple script” (Sullivan 1998:121). A well-known piece best illustrating Boal’s intentions towards invisible theatre is seen in the ferry boat performance: “An actor played a passenger who started making racist remarks about other actors/passengers; the fact that they were actors was not made apparent until after the whole boat had become involved in the dispute” (Mason 1992:6).

Creating real, unplanned disturbances in life, Boal prepared opportunities that invaded normal, everyday occurrences. Addressing problems central to a specific community, Boal attempted to passively investigate societal issues with unknowing audiences, urging them to interact with the problems and voice their objections. In order to discover what the specific issues were, Boal would first spend time in the area, isolate a problem, and then initiate action through rehearsed performances (Mason 1992:6). Boal never actively persuaded audiences to get involved, but rather provided opportunities for them to make the decision to become active or simply watch submissively. Boal took on an anthropological approach to society, insisting

on natural reactions, reiterating the importance of performances becoming stripped of theatricality and rather resembling everyday life in its likeness<sup>44</sup>.

However, not all street performers are interested in this subtle approach towards audiences. Guerrilla theatre, a term coined in 1965, referred predominantly to work created by the San Francisco Mime Troupe (Street theatre 2012). Their works, which stood against capitalism and the Vietnam War, were seen exploring taboo subjects and contained nudity as well as profanity, which became shocking for audiences to witness (Street theatre 2012). Ronnie Davis (in Sainer 1997:49) describes guerrilla theatre as a group

[w]ho surprise people in the midst of their daily routines by creating a theoretical situation where performers and audience are mixed. Often the skit happens so rapidly that the audience doesn't know it has been hit until the piece is over. The people, mildly duped, are supposed to become conscious of their responsibility and guilt. Acting more like bandits than guerrillas, and, like newspaper headlines, shouting images rather than telling news, these groups try to "sell" their product through moral suasion and personal confrontation.

Unfortunately, as a result of forceful street performances such as these, which pester audiences into submission, street theatre has become stigmatised as a harassing performance style.

Both invisible theatre and guerrilla theatre make intimate connections with their accidental audiences; however, it is their approach that alters the actual relationship between audience and performer. Where invisible theatre immerses itself subtly into a community in order to stir natural reactions, guerrilla theatre is more concerned with a momentary outburst of confrontation. Similarly, while both approaches encourage the awareness of specific issues, Boal is more interested in initiating a societal rehabilitation, moving beyond the simple recognition of the problem, which guerrilla theatre fails to address. By acknowledging the benefit of the accidental audience and the possibilities of public spaces in performance, street theatre would continue to initiate an interest in alternative spaces, particularly amongst other performing arts practitioners.

### **2.3 Summary**

Whilst Dadaism, abstract expressionism and minimalism rebuked the expectations of the traditional galleries, their unconventional means of creation readied audiences for that which was to come. Introducing readymades, dripping and intensely simplified forms into their work, these movements initiated a migration in the visual arts world, placing importance on the viewer's physical experience instead of pure aestheticism. Duchamp, Pollock, Andre and Rainer, the artists responsible for these movements, eventually created a foundation upon which other artists could expand. Performance art, happenings, land art and street theatre could be seen developing these primary concerns further, specifically with regard to the final rejection of the gallery, by moving the visual arts into more public spaces such as the streets.

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<sup>44</sup> Towards the end of the performances, Boal would reveal the truth about the pre-planned performance to those witnessing the action. Discussing their natural responses with the accidental audience, Boal would attempt to mobilise them into an awareness of social issues, as well as human reactions towards these issues (Mason 1992:6).

The first to establish their departure were Klein, Manzoni and Schneemann, who became interested in replacing the paintbrush and canvas with the human body. Second, happening artists Kaprow, Oldenburg and Cage explored their concerns for anti-art performances, rejecting linear narratives for non-matrixed designs, which were compiled using the chance method. Third, Smithson, Long, Heizer and Oppenheim emphasised the importance of the actual space or site by focusing on the specificity of the environment in which their pieces were created. Acknowledging that this symbiotic relationship between place and work at times could be fleeting, the artists involved recognised the need for documentation and recordings of their work in order to ultimately preserve the life of these works. Finally, invisible theatre and guerrilla theatre drew attention to the importance of the accidental audience, especially when attempting to address social issues imbedded in specific communities.

Recognising the importance of public spaces in their works, the artists discussed in this preliminary study encouraged further investigation of the potential of space, particularly in performance. Because of my interest in the role of space in performance (as introduced by Oppenheim and Boal in this section), I will investigate this further in the following section by reviewing the contributions made by theatre directors Artaud, Grotowski, Schechner, Malina and Beck. Focusing on their discoveries, as documented in the *Theatre of cruelty* (Artaud & Morgan 1958), *Towards a poor theatre* (Barba 1968), *The environmental theatre* (Schechner 1967) and *The living theatre* (James 1971), the following discussion aims to explore further the concept of space in relation to performers, audience and spatial design.

## **Chapter 3: Space and site: investigating spatial practitioners and site-based performance**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The relationship between performer and audience is the essence of any theatrical event and more than any other factor determines its nature [...] (Mason 1992).

The 1960s and 1970s were not only concerned with the movement of the visual artists to the streets, but these 60s and 70s artists gradually also started showing an interest in the potential for the performing arts to expand into the streets as well. More and more theatre practitioners became interested in the potential found in occupying unconventional performance spaces, as part of their interest in deconstructing the barrier between the performer and the audience. This chapter will firstly focus on theatre directors who contributed to the re-evaluation of space in performance, namely Artaud, Schechner, Grotowski, Malina and Beck. The second part of the discussion will concentrate on the shift from space to site, particularly with regard to the different approaches collected under the umbrella term site-based performance. This discussion will include a look at specific practitioners currently exploring these approaches in the Western Cape. Seeing the potential for terms such as “space” and “site” to be used interchangeably within the context of this chapter, a brief overview of my understanding of the differences between these terms will introduce the main discussion.

#### **3.1.1 Negotiating space and site**

With every new creative movement there will always be an equally new set of terminology developed by theorists who attempt to record accurate responses to it. This was also the case with the shift made by visual artists and theatre practitioners during the 1960s and 1970s. Giving in to the lure of unconventional spaces for their art and performances, artists and theatre practitioners can be seen oscillating between the terms space and site without a clear indication of where the one begins and the other ends (Turner 2004:373)<sup>45</sup>. Referring to the existing discussions on this topic (see Wilkie [2004], De Certeau [1984], Madanipour [2003] and McAuley [2005] amongst others), this section will hopefully provide some clarity on the discrepancies between these two terms, along with an understanding of their use in this thesis.

The Oxford Dictionary defines space as “a continuous area or expanse that is...unoccupied”, place as “a particular position or area”, and site as “a place where a particular event... is happening” (Soans & Hawker 2006:992, 775, 968). In contrast, De Certeau (1984:117), a prominent theorist, provides the following interpretation of the concept of space from a social science perspective:

A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of

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<sup>45</sup> Although place is also a possible term worth discussing in relation to space and site, it is not considered a focus in the theoretical study that follows, thus will only be touched on briefly.

conflictual (sic) programs or contractual proximities. On this view, in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts. [...] In short, *space is a practiced place*. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs.

In the first definitions given above, Soans and Hawker (2006) speak of space as being unoccupied. De Certeau, however, emphasises space as a form of “practiced place”, which implies that some sort of occupancy or activity is taking place there. It seems then that De Certeau’s understanding of space, as discussed here, shares far more similarities with Soans and Hawker’s definition of site, being “a place where a particular event... is happening”. Collins and Nisbet’s (2010:67) idea of space also seems to be different to the dictionary definition. They state that “space is not neutral and certainly never ‘empty’”. Developing this discussion further, Madanipour (2003) and Lefebvre (1991) suggest categories by which space can be defined.

Madanipour (2003:2) discusses space in two divisions, public space and private space, which have come to be defined through their difference in ownership. Madanipour (2003) incorporates these terms in order to illustrate how space has become structured by society’s rules and regulations. For example: “Public and private spheres... affect individuals’ mental states, regulates behaviour, and superimposes a long-lasting structure onto human societies and the spaces they inhabit” (Madanipour 2003:2). Thus, private space would refer to privately owned spaces, such as a person’s house, and public space would be that of an open playground owned by the local government. Many people assume that some public spaces, such as streets and abandoned buildings, are ownerless; however, what most site practitioners will discover when approaching an intended site for performance is that everything is owned in one way or another. Although ownership with regard to public spaces can at times be blurry, private spaces are defined by their ability to “exclude people from their use” (Cunningham 2009:86). Expanding on this, Cunningham (2009:72) differentiates between public and private space as the first being “freely accessible places, where everyone has free right of entry or free right of informational access”, and the second being “places that are not freely accessible, that have controllers who limit to access or use of that space”.

Another way of categorising space is introduced by Lefebvre (1991:164), who differentiates between “dominated” and “appropriated” space in his study *The production of space*. In a brief summary, McAuley (2005:29) describes Lefebvre’s categories as the former being “space transformed and mediated by technology and controlled by the institutions of political and economic power”, and the latter as “neutral space, modified to serve the needs and possibilities of a particular group in society”. Reflecting on this, my understanding of ‘dominated’ space is space that has been dominated by those showing potential military or political power in a society, therefore space that has become occupied or controlled. ‘Apropriated’ space is space that has been conditioned and/or set aside for a specific group, as was the case in South Africa with the

Natives Land Act of 1913, whereby the government tried to regulate the acquisition of land. While Madanipour and Lefebvre discuss the categorisation of space in terms of ownership, Lefebvre's approach seems more political in nature and therefore Madanipour's categories are more appropriate for the context of this study, which focuses on the architectural aspects of space rather than the political<sup>46</sup>. Nevertheless, what is noticeable in both these approaches to space is that space is not "unoccupied", as Soans and Hawker (2006:992) suggest in their definition. Rather, space is discussed in the same light as De Certeau's standpoint as a form of "practiced place". Thus, the question proposed at this point in time is what is the difference between space and site? In response to this, Wilkie (2004:2) suggests that:

We should note that 'site' is both noun and verb and that it therefore, when applied to a particular location, seems to imply that something (human, architectural, conceptual) has been *sited* there. But is 'site' one neat, bounded place, or can it involve a number of different, and differently related, spaces? [...] Is site always architecturally and geographically defined, or might it focus rather on the people who inhabit and visit it?

Posing a number of questions, Wilkie emphasises here the multiple elements that contribute towards defining a site. What appears at this point in time to be the most beneficial, however, is the importance she places on it being both a noun and a verb. This once again brings the discussion back to De Certeau's discussion of space, in which space is also referred to as a noun and verb in the sense that it is a "practiced place". Similar to Madanipour and Lefebvre, Pearson (in Wilkie 2004:142) suggests two site categories, namely working and abandoned, in which sites can be located and hopefully better understood.

Firstly, a "working site" is one usually occupied by a specific group of people and in current use. Performances found in these sites are usually influenced by the current usage, addressing the specific occupants present in the site. Secondly, "abandoned sites" are those that are no longer in use, thus practitioners can either focus on the past usage or the current condition of the site. Reviewing the space categories in the previous discussion in relation to these site categories, both can be seen categorising space/site according to their current usage and/or function in society. Approaching space and site in very similar ways, it is unclear up until now where these two terms could begin to diverge, especially since the understanding of them appears to be similar. McAuley (2005:37) suggests that

The term 'space' indicates that the places and relationships in question are in some sense open, and that it is through the work of artists and spectators that they will be particularised, shaped and endowed with meaning.

In the same vein, Turner (2004:373) suggests that "neither site nor performance is fixed or graspable, yet both seem to be glimpsed in passing". Both Turner and McAuley are proposing that, while these terms are open ended, it is through performance that they can be seen definable, even if just for a moment. Therefore, if it is necessary to differentiate between these terms, for the duration of this study I would refer back to the

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<sup>46</sup> Refer back to delineation in 1.5.

definitions proposed at the beginning of this section, as they appear to be the most applicable to the coming discussion on the negotiation of space, and site-based performance. Therefore, space should be understood as “a continuous area or expanse that is...unoccupied”, and site as “a place where a particular event...is happening”. Considering these terms in the light of their practical use, specifically by directors Artaud, Grotowski, Schechner, Malina and Beck, and later by site-based directors Hanekom, Coetzer and Prigge-Pienaar, will hopefully help expand on this current understanding of space and site.

### **3.2 Directing space: Artaud, Grotowski, Schechner, Malina and Beck**

#### **3.2.1 Antonin Artaud: Theatre of Cruelty**

Artaud envisioned a primal, non-verbal theatre affecting the whole organism, with performances enveloping the spectator using incantations, ancient musical instruments, rhythmical dance, symbolic gesture, masks, manikins, and ritual-like costumes (Zarrilli, McConachie, Williams & Sorgenfrei 2010:455).

There was considerable criticism of Artaud's<sup>47</sup> lack of practical justification for his somewhat poetic advances for an alternative theatre. Rejecting the “psychological theatre”, which Hodgson (1992:172) described as a theatre dependent on words, Artaud envisioned an alternative that would become known as the cruel theatre, in which the minds of audiences rather than their senses would be engaged. Whilst many misunderstood the use of the term “cruel”, Artaud insisted that it became suggestive of the theatre's ability “to act physically upon a crowd of spectators without actually hurting their bodies” (Artaud & Morgan 1958:90). Although never fully reaching the potential of his theories in his lifetime, Artaud's theoretical discoveries can be seen influencing many of the American avant-garde practitioners, such as Jerzy Grotowski, Richard Schechner and The Living Theatre's Julian Beck and Judith Malina. These practitioners will be discussed later in the study to illustrate the extent to which Artaud could be seen as an influential figure in these avant-garde approaches. However, I will first look at Artaud's intentions in his theatre designs, specifically with regard to the construction of performance space, and the ability of theatre to intercept life.

As evolutionary as Artaud might have been, the many misinterpretations of his work can be accounted for by the ambiguous documentation of his theories. As a result of the ambiguous, poetic language that was adopted to document his theatrical endeavours, many critics have labelled Artaud's theories as elitist. Two primary concerns central to Artaud's manifestos<sup>48</sup> were (1) the need for theatre to become “a surrogate for life” and (2) for theatre, through shock tactics, to become a form of therapy (Styan 1981:108). In order “to liberate audiences from linear storytelling...keyhole realism...and from all the masterpieces of the past”, Artaud focussed on altering several aspects in the theatre, namely the nature of the script, language, space and the actor-audience relationship (Zarrilli *et al.* 2010:454). Exploring similar concerns to the artists in the 1960s and 1970s, Artaud also sought a performance space away from the traditional confines of the theatre, in which he could explore the potential of a performance that could physically affect his audiences. Elements

<sup>47</sup> Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) was a French playwright, poet and theatre director. His several papers in *The theatre and its double* (1958) will be drawn on in this thesis.

<sup>48</sup> The two primary manifestos are *The theatre and its double*, and *The theatre of cruelty* (Bermel 2001).



that individualised Artaud's approach included an explicit use of surrealism and his rearrangement of performance space.

The traditional theatre building will be abandoned. In the Artaudian theatre there will be no barrier between actors and audience [...] At first hangers or barns can be used for this purpose; later special buildings will be constructed on the pattern of certain churches [...] The audience will be seated in the middle of these spaces on seats which will be moveable so that they can follow the action developing around them on all sides. The walls of the auditorium will be whitewashed in light-absorbing chalk. An elevated gallery running around the auditorium will enable the action to take place at several levels. There will be no scenery. The splendour of the costumes will be sufficient to give action vividness and color (sic) [...] lighting equipment will have to be designed to produce magical effects of great meaning (Artaud & Morgan 1958:92).

A dream-like quality, influenced by surrealism, was evident in this new theatre that Artaud intended to develop. Although many of the spatial qualities could easily be equated with a circus or amphitheatre, it was through the combination of stripping the set, removing the actor/audience separation and creating mobility that Artaud redefined the traditional playhouse. By applying these concepts, Artaud intended to break the illusion that theatre is purely entertainment. Engulfing the audience in the action, Artaud wished "to make of the theatre a reality in which one is able to believe, and which contains for the heart and senses that sort of concrete sting or bite which accompanies all real sensations" (Artaud & Morgan 1958:76). This theatre was one that could have a direct impact on its audience, changing them and rehabilitating them, merging theatre "with real life to form a genuine *event*" (Esslin 1976:103), instead of a removed representation of it.

Ridding the theatre of the division separating the stage from reality, it seems that Artaud sought a theatre that would perforate life. No practical examples of the Artaudian theatre exist, but works exhibiting similar characteristics can be seen in the contributions made by Kaprow and Boal (Sullivan 1998:121). Placing importance on dissolving the border between life and performance is evident in both these practitioners' work, specifically through their immersion of their performances in public spaces. Another similarity is the engulfing nature of these performances, whereby spectators and performers become involved in the event simultaneously. Of course contemporary practitioners can be seen deviating from the original concerns central to Artaud's theoretical premises. However, it is by using his theories as a basis upon which to expand and develop their own practices that it is evident to what extent Artaud could be seen as a visionary. By suggesting a "new theatre" which "was to supply a surrogate for life...representing a more true, more intense experience of reality" (Styan 1981:108), Artaud influenced a number of practitioners.

Jerzy Grotowski is most commonly associated with this Artaudian lineage. Whilst Grotowski acknowledges Artaud as "an extraordinary visionary", it is the lack of practical exposure and abundance of theory that lead Grotowski to label Artaud's work as "an astounding prophecy, [but] not a program" (Wolford & Schechner 1997:35). There undeniably are similar concerns running through their work, especially their interest in the East as a source, the concern for the physicality of their actors instead of the written text and, of particular



relevance to this study, their concern for space. Yet, just as there are similarities there also are points where they diverge. Focusing on Grotowski's theoretical contribution, collected under the title *Towards a poor theatre* (Barba 1968), will help to define these points of divergence, whilst drawing attention to the specific approach and concerns central to Grotowski's spatial studies.

### **3.2.2 Jerzy Grotowski: Towards a poor theatre**

The term "poor theatre", first coined by Ludwik Flaszen in 1962, has become misleading, criticised and misunderstood for theatre that lacks economic funding (Slowiak & Cuesta 2007:13). Grotowski's<sup>49</sup> intentions towards his "poor theatre" never revolved around funding, but instead shared Artaud's fascination with a "new theatre". Although never claiming to be influenced by Artaud himself, a possible lineage can be seen connecting Grotowski's developed ideas to those of Artaud, particularly with regard to performance space and audience interaction. Grotowski's contribution to the development of spatial relationships between audience members and the performers, by forming specific audience/performer relationships for each of his individual productions, can be seen as imperative for this study. Choosing spaces for specific performances, Grotowski's became preoccupied with the potential of space, its influence on the performance itself and possible audience orientation. Grotowski adopted an

... environmental approach to space, bringing spectators and performers into very close contact with each other. The performance spaces expressed the themes of the production. The spaces were not simply arranged for seeing or experiencing, but they acted strongly as signs (Wolford & Schechner 1997:27).

Grotowski deviated from conventional theatre<sup>50</sup> and employed techniques that would bring the performers into close range of the audience, incorporating them into the action, although never physically touching them. Breaking down the formal seating, placing the audience amongst the action in movable chairs, and engulfing the audience in the event, Grotowski can be seen sharing several elements specific to the design envisioned by Artaud (Wolford & Schechner 1997:27). Developing his interest in space and the potential thereof, Grotowski began to explore how "space itself [could] become a part of the dramatic action", resulting in him seeking a theatre void of illusionary setting (Slowiak & Cuesta 2007:16). From this point onwards, Grotowski's primary concern became focused on stripping the theatre of the eclectic, removing any make believe and subsequently replacing it with what Flaszen termed poor<sup>51</sup>, which became indicative of a certain type of poverty in theatre, rather than an inadequate supply of funding:

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<sup>49</sup> Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) was a Polish theatre director interested in a number of experimental projects. He was responsible for the development of the concepts "theatre laboratory" and the "poor theatre", and his work can be divided into five phases: first the *Theatre of productions*, second the *Paratheatrical phase*, third the *Theatre of sources*, fourth *Objective drama* and finally *Art as vehicle*.

<sup>50</sup> By conventional I am referring to a theatre that is constructed in the audience: stage ratio, where structured seating is provided to view the action performed on a set stage.

<sup>51</sup> This is a direct departure from the illusionary grandeur that Artaud envisioned for his surrealist-inspired productions.

The acceptance of poverty in theatre, stripped of all that is not essential to it, revealed to us not only the backbone of the medium, but also the deepest riches which lie in the very nature of the art-form (Grotowski in Collins & Nisbet 2010:126).

By ridding the theatre of the unnecessary, Grotowski simplified the act of performance into three prioritised elements: the space, the performers and the spectators. Similarly, by removing “illusionary” sets, costumes, lighting and set seating, Grotowski began to free the theatre up for unconventional experiences, particularly the possibility for the audience to become more involved in the performances, rather than merely witnessing them from a distance. An American reviewer provides a description of Grotowski’s specific audience/performer relationship: “Actors move in and out of one another’s space in demanding physical ways, but they never violate *our* space, or even look at us, though missing us by a hair’s breadth” (Kumiega 1985:61).

Along with rejecting synthetic theatre<sup>52</sup>, Grotowski also discarded the passive position ordinarily occupied by audience members. Grotowski’s primary concern was “finding the proper spectator/actor relationship for each type of performance and embodying the decision in physical arrangements” (Wolford & Schechner 1997:33). Grotowski sought out unoccupied spaces allowing the flexibility to experiment with different audience/performer dichotomies. Along with this, Grotowski abandoned the preconceived idea that audience members should receive a perfect, comfortable and identical viewing of the play performed in front of them. Two examples that illustrate how Grotowski negotiated space within his productions can be seen in the designs of *The Constant Prince*<sup>53</sup> and *Akropolis*<sup>54</sup>. In response to these alternative performance spaces, American critic Eric Bentley (in Slowiak & Cuesta 2007:16) provides an account of his experiences of the alternating position of the audience in these particular productions:

I very much admire the way in which each of your evenings was a separate exploration. I understand “environmental theatre” now, just as I now see what intimacy means. In *The Constant Prince*, we were medical students looking down on an operating table or a bullfight crowd looking down on the fight. In *Akropolis*, we were inside the world of the play and the players – within the electrified barbed wire of an extermination camp.

Thus, envisioning specific roles for the audience to fulfil, Grotowski could be seen matching his spatial designs with the intentions of casting the audience in a specific role within the performance. Many witnessing these events said that, although they were never touched, their placement in the site, and their realisation of the role in which they had been placed, made them at times feel emotionally assaulted (Kumiega 1985:70). Whilst Grotowski made a conscious effort to ignore the audience, the opposite can be said for his use of space. Care was taken by Grotowski to make sure that the audience was fully aware of the pressures of space,

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<sup>52</sup> Grotowski continuously refers to the “synthetic theatre” as opposed to the traditional theatre when discussing the contemporary theatre of the time. He explains that this synthetic theatre or rich theatre is not a theatre rich in funding, but “rich in flaws” (Wolford & Schechner 1997:32), drawing on multiple disciplines as a way to create a theatre that could possibly measure up to the exactness of life created in films.

<sup>53</sup> Images 17 (a) and 17(b) in Addendum A.

<sup>54</sup> Image 18 in Addendum A.

whether it was by filling it up with rusted metal, or by elevating the audience in order to give them a full view of the room.

Finally, by removing all that was unnecessary, uniting all “aspects of the production to create a living, dynamic space that functioned only for that particular work”, Grotowski could be seen developing work that would become characteristic of environmental theatre (Slowiak & Cuesta 2007:16). Another practitioner involved in the theoretical and practical development of environmental theatre is Richard Schechner. Although Schechner differs from Grotowski in more ways than one, the importance placed on tying space and performance together, whilst engulfing the audience in a particular space, is reiterated continuously throughout Schechner’s practical exploration.

### **3.2.3 Richard Schechner: Theatres, spaces, and the environment**

Refusing definitions, claiming them “all bullshit because they deny the perceptual nature of the thing” (Schechner 1990:97), Schechner<sup>55</sup> can be seen sharing similar concerns in relation to the use of space to the artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Resisting the finiteness that followed the very essence of a definition, Schechner, like Artaud and Grotowski, explored a new theatre, one that investigated primarily the relationship between space, performer and audience. Schechner ignored parameters and defied society’s insistence on definitions, thereby allowing for a continuous engagement of different sources and materials to encroach on his work. Schechner (1971:390) declined the usual descriptive words such as “stage” and “auditorium”, and became involved in the development of an alternative form, which became known as environmental theatre. Being interested in the possibilities that a space might have, not only in a performance, but also with regard to audience interaction, Schechner shared some similar concerns to Grotowski, who sought specific spaces for individualised performances. Beginning with an overview of Schechner’s ideologies of space, and how space is controlled and defined, hopefully will provide a foundation upon which to understand Schechner’s growing interest in developing environmental theatre.

Schechner (1997:11) discusses the specific arrangements tied to traditional structures such as churches, theatres and sport stadiums in an investigation of conventional spaces. These specialised structures, built in central geographic positions, for the most part stand empty until a specific, scheduled occasion arises during which congregations, audiences or sport fans flood the space to its full capacity. The masses occupying these specialised spaces do so with a common expectation of what to anticipate, which results in a preliminary solidarity amongst them. Another fixed feature that initiates this social solidarity is the common negotiation of space found in these structures, whereby “the spaces are uniquely organized so that a large group can watch a small group” (Schechner 2003:13). Not entirely convinced that social solidarity relies solely on this specific negotiation of space, Schechner attempted to challenge traditional theatre by exploring an alternative. This became known as environmental theatre.

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<sup>55</sup> Richard Schechner (1934) is an American professor and established theatre director who is perhaps known best for his theoretical contribution on performance studies. He completed a number of studies on the nature of performance and rituals within theatre, and the focus of this study therefore will be on his specific contribution to and development of environmental theatre.

Rejecting the “segregation of audience from performers... fixed regular seating... [and] construction of scenery situated in one part of the theatre only”, environmental theatre not only abandoned multiple elements of traditional theatre, but showed a particular interest in the Bauhaus movement<sup>56</sup> (Schechner 1971:379). Schechner began to include elements specifically found in Bauhaus theatre designs, specifically with regards to the audience/performer relationships (Collins & Nisbet 2010:97). Essential characteristics to which Schechner became drawn included Bauhaus’s ability to transform the space, breaking the orthodox division between audience and stage and inevitably leaking the play’s imagery across the previously rigid division between life and make-believe. Gropius (in Schlemmer, Gropius, Moholy-Nagy & Molnar 1979:12) explains the typical Bauhaus use of space as follows:

An audience will shake off its inertia when it experiences the surprise effect of space transformed. By shifting the scene of action during the performance from one stage position to another and by using a system of spotlights and film projectors, transforming walls and ceilings into moving picture scenes, the whole house would be animated by three-dimensional means instead of by the ‘flat’ picture effect of the customary stage.

Reminiscent of Artaud, this engulfing nature spoken about in Bauhaus design is eventually what Schechner is drawn to, especially in his environmental designs. Although Schechner’s designs were not as decadent as those found in the Bauhaus archives, this initial break away from the conventional use of space led Schechner to re-examine the possibilities of theatre spaces, especially with regard to audience participation:

Once one gives up fixed seating and the bifurcation of space, entirely new relationships are possible. Body contact can naturally occur between performers and audience; voice levels and acting intensities can be widely varied; a sense of shared experience can be engendered. Most importantly, each scene can create its own space, either contracting to a central or a remote area or expanding to fill all available space. The action “breathes” and the audience itself becomes a major scenic element (Schechner 1968:49).

As environmental theatre was concerned specifically with performances that “create and use whole spaces...which contain... [and] envelope” audiences, Schechner devised new approaches in order to sustain this primary interest (Schechner 1971:379). By investigating different spaces, indoor, outdoor, found spaces and transformed spaces, Schechner (1971:385) insisted that “each environment grew out of detailed work with the performers”, and not in isolation from one another. It therefore can be said that spaces were worked into performances, instead of simply being used as a backdrop. Two specific approaches used by Schechner to investigate and arrange environmental spaces were (1) transformed spaces and (2) negotiated spaces.

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<sup>56</sup> Initially recognised for their contribution between the years 1919 and 1933 in Weimar, the Bauhaus theatre was interested primarily in architecture. However, like many of the other so-called ‘new theatres’ established during the 1960s, those involved in the Bauhaus initiative started incorporating multiple disciplines, rather than remaining primarily concerned with architecture.

Whilst a transformed space allowed Schechner to slip a production into an artificially altered space, negotiated spaces relied on the ability of performances to negotiate with “an environment, engaging in scenic dialogue with the space” itself (Schechner in Wilkie 2004:13). While both the transformed and negotiated approaches encourage an intermingling of the audience, performers and space, it is the specific nature in which the space is utilised that ultimately set these approaches apart. In the first (transformed space), Schechner engineered the spaces to suit a certain placement of the audience. This is not to say that there was a permanent location for the audience in the space, but rather that Schechner pre-planned seating options, which the audience could freely choose. This meant that Schechner’s transformed spaces allowed for less fluidity of the audience and more pre-planned engagement between the audience and the performers. In contrast, Schechner’s negotiated space allowed for audiences to move freely in the space, interpreting their own placement by following the action of the performers. In both approaches it can be seen that it was never Schechner’s intention to confine the audience to designed constrictions, yet to some extent it was unavoidable not to plan the audience involvement, even in environments which used all the surface areas of individual spaces (Schechner 1968:50).

In conjunction with these different negotiations of space, Schechner also replaced the ordinary single-focus point of view<sup>57</sup> with a multi-focus (Schechner 1968:56). Incorporating this multi-focus, Schechner intended to coax audiences to investigate different areas of the space, intending them to move through the space if they wished to see the specific action clearly. Thus, by allowing for multiple events to occur simultaneously, Schechner’s intention was to place several independent events in the space that could compete against one another for the audience’s attention (Schechner 1968:56). Although audiences had the choice to reposition themselves in order to experience these events, or to remain uninvolved, simply by developing these alternative performance focuses Schechner was deviating from the traditional idea that all audience members should receive one single view of a production. Developing this further, the final focus that Schechner introduced into his theoretical study was the local-focus (Schechner 1968:56). Interested in the possible drawing in of individual audience members, Schechner’s local-focus events would take place largely without the majority of the audience knowing. These local-focus events, usually between a single performer and an audience member, could be small or elaborate, intimate or ambiguous, but their importance lay in their ability to personalise a viewer’s experience of the event.

Unlike Grotowski’s, Schechner’s performers were not restricted to ignoring the spectators. Rather, the performers could physically touch spectators, include them in dialogue and encourage “active participation” (Schechner 1990:98). Through the interchangeable possibilities of these different focuses, Schechner was able to (1) re-evaluate the potential of an audience’s perception of a performance, (2) encourage the movement of the audience in the space, and (3) permit active participation in the action. As a direct result of this spectator interaction with the performance, Schechner (1971:389) brings to our attention the importance of the spectators’ ability to experience the space not only with their eyes and ears, but with their whole being:

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<sup>57</sup> The single focus is characteristically used in traditional theatre. Audiences are positioned to receive a performance from a single view, usually positioned straight on, parallel to the stage, which becomes their primary focus.

“In environmental theatre his whole body is engaged in the experience of the play. He witnesses not only with his eyes, but with his knees and viscera as well.”

Because physical closeness was allowed, Schechner found it important to understand the relationship between body space and performance space. He accomplished this firstly by eliminating conventional seating, and secondly by placing importance on the lights, which remained on. Unlike other traditional approaches, which use lighting to dissolve the audience’s awareness of each other, Schechner insisted that the spectators should “not lose sight of each other...[and] not be isolated and disembodied in darkness” (Schechner 1971:390). By insisting on general lighting, Schechner was able to encourage intermingling between the performers and spectators; however, their awareness of one another, especially one other’s expressions, became increasingly heightened. By creating this awareness, Schechner encouraged spectators to not only engage in the performers’ actions, but also the reactions of their fellow spectators. Because they were aware of one another, especially of one another’s responses, Schechner attempted to layer the audience’s experience of the performance, supplying multiple stimuli that could create a unique response in each audience member. In this way, Schechner called to question the relationship between the audience, performer and environment, particularly with regard to how each informed the other (Schechner 1971:379).

Another element worth mentioning is Schechner’s thoughts on the finality of a work. Unlike more traditional performances, which are tailored from a finite script, Schechner’s performances were never thought to be finished, but were forever evolving. Schechner (1971:397) explains that the “environment is not finished when the play opens. The line between rehearsal and performance dissolves, as does the line between an unfinished and finished environment”. By encouraging flexibility within the performance, Schechner was able to allow for unplanned events such as audience involvement. Mirroring similar approaches to those incorporated in street theatre, The Living Theatre and site-based performance, Schechner continued to investigate the relationship between performance, space and spectator in a semi-unstructured performance situation. Even though performances allowed for these unplanned moments, it would be a misunderstanding to interpret such performances as completely improvised. Instead, the performances focused, as emphasised by Artaud, on the absolute live communion between spectators, performers and their environment, which could only occur truthfully in these unplanned moments (Schechner 1971:389).

Schechner’s contributions to space show some similarities to those already established by Artaud and Grotowski. Investigating the relationship between performer, spectator and environment-specific performances, Schechner included audiences in the action of the performance in order to make them aware of the relationship between themselves and his constructed environments. Actively including spectators in the performance, and critically analysing the potential of alternative spatial features, Schechner pre-empted elements that site practitioners would engage with in their work. By removing the importance placed on the finality of the work, whilst creating a socially aware theatre, Schechner also began to touch on specific elements similar to those introduced by Beck and Malina with The Living Theatre.



### **3.2.4 The Living Theatre**

Although a large number of The Living Theatre's<sup>58</sup> performances have remained in a conventional stage:auditorium ratio, what is relevant to this study is not just their works, but also how they came to be. Influenced by Artaud, The Living Theatre adopted the particular Artaudian approach to the audience, specifically with regard to the ability of a performance to engulf the audience in the action, transforming them into active participants in the theatrical event. Whether in a seemingly traditional-looking theatre, or an alternative space, The Living Theatre challenged the audience not simply by getting amongst them, but by including them in "real discomfort, caused by real bodies with real sweat and saliva" (James 1971:478).

Originally conceived by Judith Malina, and joined shortly thereafter by Julian Beck in 1943, the origins of this theatre company began as an alternative when neither founder was able to get work in the popular Broadway scene. Experimenting with well-known playwrights Ibsen and Strindberg, and even with translated dramas from the traditional Japanese Noh, Beck and Malina began to establish their desire for a repertory theatre company in America. However, with the lack of funding and rehearsal space, the pair took to performing in their small living room – which witnesses argued played an important role in the naming of their efforts. Pierre Biner (1972:21) explores the choice of name further:

They had chosen the name "Living Theatre" from among some fifty possibilities early in 1947. It was to be a "Living" theatre, one that would emphasize contemporary plays performed in such a manner as to move the spectators. When the Becks began staging plays in their apartment, for lack of suitable space ... some wags attributed the name of the troupe to the fact it was located in the Beck's "living" room.

James Scheville (1973:120) argues in his "Living Room" Theatre manifesto, that it was nearly impossible to create innovative theatre in New York, as television had begun to confine people to their homes. As a result, Scheville attempted to confront viewers in their actual homes, bringing theatre to them in intimate private spaces, instead of the theatre spaces traditionally used. Beck and Malina's practical experience of this, although possibly explored in ignorance of Scheville's manifesto, provides evidence of the possibilities of such an intimate theatre. Simply by performing their work in an alternative space, The Living Theatre had begun to investigate two possible elements associated with site-based work, namely (1) unconventional spaces and (2) performer/audience intimacy.

A number of different spaces were used in The Living Theatre's repertoire, alternating between unconventional spaces, such as lofts, streets and prisons, to more conventional spaces like the Cherry Lane Theatre (Biner 1972:40). At this point in time, spaces were used interchangeably in The Living Theatre's

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<sup>58</sup> Based in New York City, The Living Theatre is a company that has existed since 1947. Originally led by founding members Judith Malina (actress) and Julian Beck (artist/poet), Hanon Reznikov became a co-founding member with Malina after Beck's death in 1985. As one of the oldest experimental theatre groups still active, The Living Theatre's foundations are planted firmly in the text originally created by Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*. Essentially, the group looks to create work oppositional to that conventionally Broadway, achieving this by becoming known for their radical work that would purposefully confront audience members by dissolving the fourth wall and physically engaging the audience in the action.



performances, therefore it is unclear how dependent these performances were on specific spaces, and to what extent these spaces influenced the performances. For the most part, it appears that the group struggled to secure a single space, or even a permanent space to ensure a repertory theatre. That being said, these transitions between spaces did not impede on the practitioners' ultimate concern with audience involvement. Whether the audience were seated in the conventional configuration, or standing in clumps, the performers would approach them, addressing them personally, coaxing some sort of engagement, rather than ignoring them as Grotowski insisted upon (Biner 1972). As a result, The Living Theatre turned their performances into a communion between audience and performer:

The physical contact in which players and spectators spontaneously engage is meant to draw the individual out of the passive, uncreative, and even uncommunicating (sic) isolation that the role of spectator usually implies, whether at the theatre, in church, or in life outside (James 1971:476).

This spontaneous engagement that James speaks of is a direct result of the spatial versatility central to the company's performances. By allowing for their performances to take place in different spaces, they in turn were able to open themselves up to new ways of forming an interaction between the performers and the audience. Using The Living Theatre's performance of *Six Public Acts* (which was performed during the Experimental Theatre Festival in Ann Arbor<sup>59</sup>) as an example will help to expand on this. Performing in six different sites spaced in and around the Pittsburgh University campus, The Living Theatre not only occupied public spaces, but also involved the audience intimately in performances. Vicentini (1975:81) gives an account of the actual event:

An audience of about four hundred gathered outside Waterman Gymnasium at the scheduled time and waited for half an hour. The door was eventually opened; the spectators crowded into the entrance and were given a program that included a "preamble" and "six Houses"... Each of the six parts took place in a different location. A mimeograph map handed to each spectator showed the route along which the performance moved through the campus and the city. The preamble took place in the gymnasium; the first part was presented a few yards away, on the lawn outside the Engineering building (the House of Death), then the performance moved to the flagpole at the centre of the campus (House of State), a bank branch (House of Money), the university administration building (House of War), and, finally, to the park surrounding the Power Centre (House of Love).

Broken into six parts, the performance was held together by a "Time Shaman", who would conclude the subparts to initiate the movement of the audience to the next House (Vicentini 1975:82). Not only was the company exploring the possibility of moving the audience into different locations, but by interrogating these already known university spaces in a new way, the company raised questions about the familiar spaces,

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<sup>59</sup> Ann Arbor is a city in the US state of Michigan; The Living Theatre performed *Six Public Acts* here in May 1975 (Carlson 1989:34).

specifically with regards to the function of these spaces. For example: during “The House of Death” the performers even “approached the audience, trying to start informal discussions about violence in our lives and the use of violence by the social system that controls us” (Vicentini 1975:85). Even though the performance was predominantly rehearsed, moments like this one would have called for a level of flexibility within the performance that echoes similar qualities found in Schechner and Oldenburg’s works. Incorporating this level of flexibility, The Living Theatre could be seen to encourage natural responses between the audience, the performers and the subject matter.

### **3.2.5 A brief review of Artaud, Grotowski, Schechner, Malina and Beck**

Beginning with Artaud and continuing as a concern throughout the work of Grotowski, Schechner, Malina and Beck, there is an intentional motivation to break the conventional theatre/auditorium configuration. While Artaud envisioned movable chairs, which would allow the audience to experience the performance from multiple perspectives, Grotowski and Schechner removed seating completely, encouraging the audience to experience the space by physically coming into contact with the space and moving through it. Breaking the traditionally constructed boundary between the performers and the audience, these directors also began to transform the passive audience members of the proscenium arch theatre into active spectators. While Artaud, Grotowski, Schechner and The Living Theatre’s Malina and Beck insisted on different degrees of engagement with the audience, the involvement of the audience is seen as a common concern within all four of these approaches.

Another developing interest central to these practitioners’ approaches is the importance they place on the identification of specific (constructed or found) spaces for individual performances. According to Schechner (1971:391) it is vital that “each production generates its own space”, as it is only by working with the space that the performance and space can coexist, rather than the one overshadowing the other. By emphasising this, Schechner, and later Malina and Beck, illustrate how practitioners developed an interest in the specifics of a space, and how these specifics could inform a performance. Therefore, by moving away from the generalised use of space, and gradually moving their performances to “real spaces”, Malina and Beck began to follow an approach that could be described as far more site-based than that of Artaud or Grotowski.

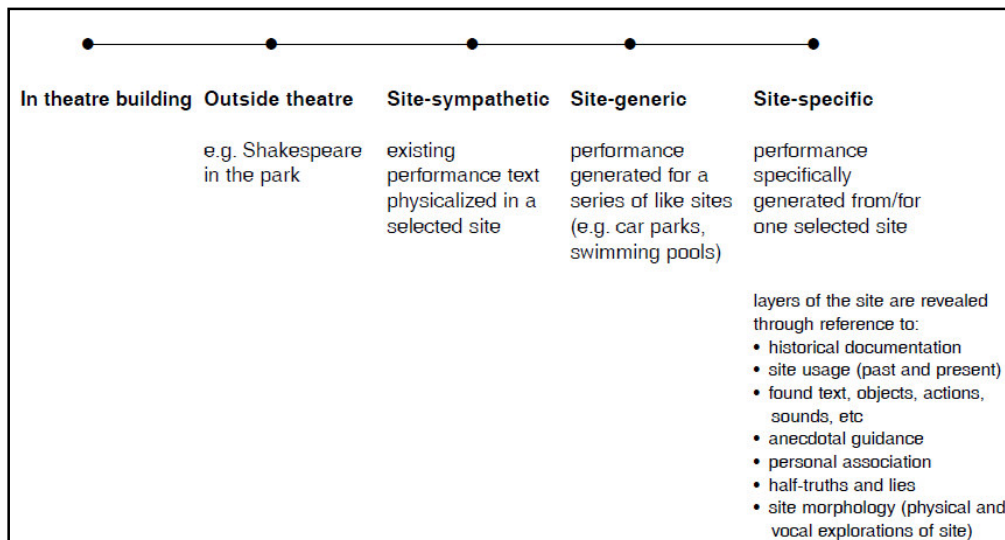
### **3.3 Site-based performance**

Site-based performance is, at its least radical, a move by artists to reject what they perceive to be the dominated space of traditional theatre buildings in favour of found spaces in which new relations between performer and spectator can be explored, where the spectators gains a new kind of creative agency, and where the place itself acquires a voice (McAuley 2005:29).

First emerging in 1990, site-based has become a term under which a number of different approaches to the use of sites in performance have begun to collect. Whilst several alternating labels are used by theatre practitioners to refer to these approaches, the most commonly used terms, according to Wrights & Sites (in Wilkie 2004:54), are site-sympathetic, site-generic and site-specific. One other sub-category that is not included by Wrights and Sites although spoken about regularly by practitioners Koplowitz (in Pavlik &

Kloetzel 2009), Duckler (in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009) and Pearson (in Wilkie 2004), is site-adjusted<sup>60</sup> performance. Seeking a preliminary set of characteristics upon which to base my initial understanding of these terms, I referred to a general description of these approaches by Wrights & Sites<sup>61</sup> (in Wilkie 2004:54) in the diagram below.

**Diagram 1: Possible sub-categories of site-based performance** (Wright & Sites in Wilkie 2004:54)



While this diagram offers one possible description of the different approaches collected under site-based performance, it should not be thought of as finite or conclusive of the approaches in any way. One important detail that can be highlighted at this point is the specific site/performance relationship that Wrights & Sites emphasise in each approach. As I am specifically interested in the role of the site in each of these approaches (site-adjusted, site-generic, site-sympathetic and site-specific), the following sections aim to give a brief overview of each of these approaches. In previous discussions by Koplowitz (in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:65), site-adjusted and site-generic has the potential to become interchangeable, therefore these two approaches will be discussed under one heading.

### **3.3.1 Site-adjusted/Site-generic**

According to Coetzer (2013), site-adjusted could possibly be seen as the most commonly applied approach adopted by practitioners when intending to prolong the longevity of their site-based works. Site-adjusted or site-generic, according to Koplowitz (in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:75), can be described as follows:

A particular site inspires the content and execution of a piece, but it can be performed in similar sites anywhere. Here the type of site is the constant, no matter where it is located, and the work easily adapts to the particular aspects of the site.

<sup>60</sup> There is an interchangeable use of the term site-adjusted (see Duckler in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:85) and site-adaptive (see Koplowitz in Kloetzel & Pavlik 2009:75) in the theoretical discourse. For the sake of continuity I use the term site-adjusted in this study.

<sup>61</sup> Wrights & Sites, a group of four artists/researchers, is situated in the UK. First established in 1997, their work is a conglomeration of public art, installations, mis-guided tours and site-specific performances. Focusing on the relationship between people, landscape, cities and walking, they explore the different shifts in and views of everyday life (Wright & Sites 2011).

Enabling works to move from place to place, this approach regards the site as a flexible element of the performance, allowing it to become replaceable with a similar site in a different location. Koplowitz (in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:74) explains that site-adjusted work primarily “involves bringing a created work to a site”. Thus, the site is not placed at the centre of the creative process, but performances are created with a specific type and/or kind of site (or sites) in mind. Secondly, sites for these performances are chosen according to their generic nature and multiplicity.

Being based in the Western Cape, my first experience of site-based work was a production, *Tol(l)*, directed by Nicola Hanekom. *Tol(l)* made use, for example, of a car park, allowing the performance to be recreated in a number of similar sites without the structure or content of the production being affected. Apart from the general use of the site by this performance, Hanekom also allowed the addition of theatre elements such as lighting, sound and a defined audience area, which made the site ‘theatre like’. In this approach, the mobility and repeatability factor of these performances is vital. Therefore the site has to be passive in its relationship to the performance, subtly responding to the performance, but never enough for the performance to become changed by it. The inclusion of theatre elements such as lighting, sound and structured seating ensured the predictability of the performances in different sites, by making sure that the lights focused on the primary acting area and that the audience was positioned accordingly to receive the performance as planned by the director.

### **3.3.2 Site-sympathetic**

According to Wrights & Sites (in Wilkie 2004:54), site-sympathetic is a term that refers to an “existing performance text physicalized (sic) in a selected site”. If this is the case, Grotowski’s *The Constant Prince* and *Akropolis* can be seen as the preliminary productions influencing the construction of this term (Slowiak & Cuesta 2007:16). While Grotowski’s work placed a specific amount of attention on the construction of the space, especially with regard to textures and dimensions, there is a definite application of a prewritten script on a specific space. Based on my understanding of the term, site-sympathetic performances are constructed in isolation from the site, introducing the site as you would a stage (with a set design in place) towards the end of the process. However, unlike a stage, which is a controlled and predictable environment, the incorporation of a site informs the performance by the architecture as well as the changing environmental conditions (sounds, smells, temperature, etc.) of the site (Pearson 2010:165). By comparison, site-adjusted performances are seen to include the site in a far more specified way than site-sympathetic performances. An example used by Gleave (2011:6) to illustrate the nature of the site in the site-sympathetic approach is Shakespeare in the park. Although Wrights & Sites use this example under ‘Outside theatre’, Gleave (2011:6) explains that, while “an outdoor production of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* could be categorised as ‘outside theatre’ ... it could also fit into the category of ‘site sympathetic’”. Pearson (2010:7) explains this further:

The insertion of a classical or modern text in this found space throws new light on it, gives it an unsuspected power and places the audience at an entirely different relationship to the text, the place and the purpose of being there [...]

While the site is not the driving force behind the creation of the performance in this approach, the site should not become “just an interesting backdrop” (Pearson & Shanks 2001:23), nor an “immobile lifeless container” (Wiles 2003:7). Referring back to the example suggested by Wrights & Sites (2010), namely Shakespeare in the park, it is my opinion that even though the site can play a role in informing the text (giving it new meaning), the site is still placed in a secondary position to the creative process. In saying this, my understanding of this approach is a text-based performance, which is not necessarily written with a site in mind, which uses the site’s architectural and environmental features to re-inform the meaning of the original script. Unlike this approach, which introduces the site as a secondary feature towards the end of the creative process, the site-specific approach, which according to Gleave (2011) is the most restrictive site-based approach, places the site at the centre.

### **3.3.3 Site-specific**

Site specificity used to imply something grounded, bound to the laws of physics. Often playing with gravity, site-specific works used to be obstinate about “presence”, even if they were materially ephemeral, and adamant about immobility, even in the face of disappearance or destruction (Kwon 1997:85).

It is undeniable that the core feature of Kwon’s statement is the grounded nature of site-specific performances within their sites, refusing to even acknowledge the possibility of their existence in another site. Pearson (in Kaye 1996:211) seems to agree with Kwon’s view on site-specific performance, saying that site-specific work should be “conceived for, mounted within and conditioned by the particulars of its site and the people it finds there”. Another site director arguing for the centrality of the site in site-specific performance is Koplowitz. In the anthology *Site Dance: choreographers and the lure of alternative spaces*, Koplowitz (in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:76) expands the role of the site in a site-specific approach by saying that:

Every decision respond[s] to the site itself. The design and functional history of each of these sites is so individual that the works in their entirety could not be done anywhere else. Certain segments could be lifted out, but the work would then become something else, and would fall into another category.

From this, the following can be deduced about a site-specific approach to performance: firstly, the performances are created in direct response to the site; secondly, performances should not be removed from their original site; and lastly, by moving them, the purpose and function of the original performance will change. Having confirmed the importance of the position of the site in this approach, Duckler (in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009: 87) also emphasises that the performance should respond holistically to the site, as “it is not just what you see but also what you smell, the temperature, the response of the audience, and the accidental audiences” that influence the nature of this approach. In saying this, Duckler touches on the unpredictable nature of the site-specific approach, specifically with regard to the performance’s interaction with the audience. Kwon (1997:86) also touches on the importance of the relationship between the audience and

performance when he states that site-specific works “demanded the physical presence of the viewer for the work’s completion”.

In short, the site-specific approach places importance on three primary concerns: firstly, the centrality of the site; secondly, the importance of the audience (accidental and planned); and lastly, the immovability of the performance to another site. However, this is not to say that all theorists share the same perspective as that suggested by Koplowitz, Pearson and Duckler. Gleave (2011:11) argues against site exclusivity in her essay, *The reciprocal process of the site and the subject in devising site-specific performance*, by suggesting that:

To say that moving the work is destroying it is restrictive. The movement of a site specific work will understandably alter and inform the piece yet it is also possible that it will open up the piece to more creative possibilities.

Unable to respond to Gleave’s statement at this point, because of insufficient information with regard to this subject, this statement will be returned to after the completion of the practical study. For now, my understanding of site-specific performance is that it is a performance which is constructed from and for one selected site by responding holistically to the site, and which calls for the participation of a planned or accidental audience.

### **3.4 Three local approaches to site-based performance**

Using the above discussion as a basis upon which to begin my practical investigation of a site-specific approach to performance, and having already discussed a number of European site directors (namely those developing work under the name Wrights & Sites, as well as Pearson and Koplowitz), three South African site-based directors were contacted in order to explore the current exploration of site-based work in the Western Cape. My primary aim in doing this was to (1) develop my understanding with regard to the possible approaches that one can follow when devising a site-based performance, and (2) assess the current (from 2010 to 2013) understanding that practitioners are attaching to the term site-specific.

Samantha Prigge-Pienaar<sup>62</sup>, Louise Coetzer<sup>63</sup> and Nicola Hanekom<sup>64</sup> were the three directors/choreographers included in this study. By conducting interviews with them (personal and electronic), insight was gained into (1) the director’s position on site-based performance, (2) their individual creative processes and (3) their thoughts on the use and understanding of the term site-specific. While their input will be seen as fundamental

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<sup>62</sup> Prigge-Pienaar is currently a senior lecturer and curriculum developer in movement and physical theatre at the Stellenbosch University Drama Department. Prigge-Pienaar, who has been part of the staff since 2006, was the first practitioner to introduce me to a site-specific approach to performance.

<sup>63</sup> As a young practitioner based in Cape Town, Coetzer is the founder of the recently established company Darkroom Contemporary. Emerging in 2010, this company focuses on being a non-profit organisation, as well as a physical theatre company interested in the development of site-specific performance in the Western Cape. I was first introduced to her site-specific film work *I walk the streets with loose parts* (see footage at <http://www.darkroomcontemporary.com/film/#.UZ0EfRyGm68>), and Coetzer is the first South African practitioner to introduce me to the potential of site-specific performance designed especially for film.

<sup>64</sup> Based in South Africa, Hanekom is best known for her contributions to film, television and theatre. As director, actress and playwright, her work explores a diverse range of approaches, from traditionally staged dramas and physical theatre to her most recent work, which involves the exploration of site-based performance.



to the next chapter by providing insight into understanding a practical approach to site-based performance, an introductory overview of their individual approaches will be given here.

Following a more conventional role as director, Nicola Hanekom was the first site practitioner to attract my attention. Hanekom is the only word-based director of the three selected and her work focuses primarily on bringing a scripted performance to a chosen site, as seen in her site trio *Lot*, *Betèsda* and *Babbel* (Hanekom 2013). Because she constructs texts independently to the site it could suggest that her work follows more of a site-sympathetic approach, placing the site in a passive role. However, according to Hanekom she is too interested in the “realness” of the site – “the real dust, real horses, real birds, real fire [and] real cars” – for them not to play an interactive role in her productions. For this reason, Hanekom’s work can be seen to fall under a site-generic/site-adjusted approach, especially since the majority of her work occupies generic sites such as “a pool, field with fence, deserted cell phone tower” and, more recently, a bus (Hanekom 2013). Hanekom’s work is created with the potential to move between different locations by using different ‘types’ of sites. She has the following to say about the challenges behind the process of a travelling site-based performance:

Quite a few adjustments have to be made. Entrances and exits for example are interesting because there are no wings. So where people come from and go to can be a challenge. Fate might spring you unpleasant surprises like electric cables or a massive rock where you have to dig a vital hole in the ground for a specific placement, or snakes. They had a national gala in our pool so we couldn’t rehearse for *Betèsda* as much as we wanted to for instance. You have to be flexible and roll with it but most of all make a plan, seek solutions (Hanekom 2013).

Another site practitioner who also is investigating the ability to adjust site-based work is director/choreographer Louise Coetzer. Working under the name *Darkroom Contemporary*, Coetzer has been establishing her site-specific work at a number of dance film festivals at a local and global level since 2010 (Coetzer 2013)<sup>65</sup>. Coetzer (2013) describes the process behind the creation of these film-based projects as “you enter the site, and create a performance entirely of the site, sometimes in an hour and sometimes longer”. There is no inclusion of a planned audience<sup>66</sup> during the filming of these 10-minute films; however, this does not mean that there are no accidental audience<sup>67</sup> members:

Often, depending on the site, we will have an hour to shoot the entire performance. In the case of *I walk the streets with loose parts*, the hour we had set aside to film just so happened to be

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<sup>65</sup> Currently, dance film is a relatively unexplored genre in South Africa. Drawn to its potential, Darkroom Contemporary is one of the few local companies to emerge that is developing this medium further. Through regular screenings and discussions, primarily based in Cape Town, it is the company’s intention to create awareness of the potential success that this medium might have in a country such as South Africa specifically in the way that it can make “work accessible to audiences worldwide” (Darkroom Contemporary 2013). Festivals in which Darkroom Contemporary has been interested are The Letters from the Sky Festival (international film festival) and the Grahamstown National Arts Festival.

<sup>66</sup> This is a term used to refer to the conventional audience, one that arrives with the expectation of seeing a performance/production.

<sup>67</sup> This refers to a group of individuals who accidentally come across the performance and begin to watch, sometimes becoming included in the action.



the busiest time in the site. With the continual flow of pedestrians, I decided there was two ways of looking at this; firstly I could scrap the project, or secondly include these individuals and see what happens. Choosing the later, it was beautiful to see the impact of the streams of pedestrians, especially in comparison to the cutting nature of the performance (Coetzer 2013).

Coetzer's films, share many of the interests found central to the site-specific approach, specifically in the way she utilises the site's features as well as includes the accidental audience in the final product. However it is her attempt to prolong the life span of these original film based works by allowing them to resonate with entirely different spaces that Coetzer's site-specific works become site-adjusted. For example, Coetzer will transfer works from their original sites, adjusting them to fit into more conventional spaces such as the District Six Museum in Cape Town, the Baxter Theatre foyer and the Cape Town City Hall (Darkroom Contemporary 2013).

Regarding the process of gradually shifting from a site-specific to a site-adjusted approach, particularly in terms of the impact it has on the production itself, Coetzer (2013) says:

All of our works starts off as site-specific because we choose a location and create specific pieces for that space, but then what often happens is that the piece will travel to different festivals or be placed in a traditional theatre as a means to generate financial funding... this always changes the performance into something else... you have to be okay with the idea that it is going to be something very different... you can't think you are going to replicate it... you have to let go of it and let it become something else.

Coetzer hereby pinpoints one of the main reasons why practitioners lean towards a site-adjusted approach: financial stability. Koplowitz (in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:75) concurs, stating that, in the long term, "Site-adaptive work has the potential to be the most economical or attractive to make because of the repeatability factor". Comparing the two adjusted approaches (Coetzer and Hanekom) it can be said that there are definite degrees to which a performance can be termed "adjusted". Unlike Hanekom, whose work is easily placed in "like sites" (Hanekom 2013), Coetzer (2013) focuses attention on the different "moods" of each site she places her work in, and the implications of that:

Because the site is seen as a character in the dialogue of the physical actions making up the performance, by taking it away, or replacing it with something else, the piece can become unfilled, bare and empty... for this reason the performance must change and become responsive, in a unique way, to the new site.

The sites physical features are then responsible for the degree of change in the content and structure of the original performance. While some performances are fully adapted in order to fit into different sites, others are able to be placed into similar sites with little alterations being done to the original performance. The question proposed then is whether site-adjusted and site-generic can in actual fact be seen as the same approach. Although practitioners Duckler and Koplowitz (Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:75) use these terms

interchangeably, it is in my opinion that it is the degree in which the performance becomes adapted, as well as the relationship between the site and the performance, that ultimately differentiates these two approaches from one another. Since I have only recognised this now, as a result of the differences in Hanekom's and Coetzer's approaches, I would like to revisit the previous discussion and correct my original presumption by stating that site-adjusted and site-generic cannot be seen as interchangeable. In response to this discussion, it can now be said that a site-generic approach places performances in "like sites", encouraging very little change in the overall essence of the performance. On the other hand, site-adjusted performances permit performances to become changed by the new responses to the different sites, allowing for the performance to become reframed and accommodate new commentary brought on by the new site.

In contrast to Hanekom and Coetzer, Samantha Prigge-Pienaar can be seen exploring a site-specific approach to performance. As an undergraduate student at Stellenbosch University, my first impression of site-specific performance was constructed by a module conducted by Prigge-Pienaar. Having completed several large group productions with students, Prigge-Pienaar (2013) explains that it is the "unpredictable imagery that is created in the moment of being performed" that she is drawn to most. When asked to provide other possible characteristics for a site-specific approach, Prigge-Pienaar (2013) said:

Of course the focus should be on one specific site and everything gets generated from within that location [...] but I don't think it's possible to give generic characteristics, because apart from the fact that it's a specific site it's also a specific group of people that interact with the site and specific themes that they will see in relationship to the site.

In comparison to Gleave (2011), Prigge-Pienaar argues for the preservation of the exclusivity of the site in the site-specific approach. One specific performance facilitated by Prigge-Pienaar that best illustrates the importance of this site exclusivity is her most "site-specific" production to date, *We make we mend we break we bend*. Constructed in and from a temporarily abandoned building site, Prigge-Pienaar explains that, while "you can't create a site-specific performance according to a 9-5 rehearsal schedule; all rehearsals should be kept in the site". Continuously emphasising the site's role in this approach as imperative, Prigge-Pienaar goes on to state that it is only by "improvising with the bodies in the site that the work being created could explore the inherent themes of that specific site". Prigge-Pienaar (2013) describes her approach in the creative process of *We make we mend we break we bend* as follows:

We came in as a group and got to know the site through a lot of improvisations in the space, and only in the space. Dodging live wires, we explored these improvisations some concentrating on the architecture, others being sensory but all of them contributing overall to understanding the dustiness of the site. Because of this, the production could not possibly be performed in another site, as it relied on the current state of the site.

Being interested in the collection of Prigge-Pienaar's work, which primarily take place in "dusty" abandoned spaces, transitional spaces and building sites, I was intrigued to see the lack of potential for unplanned interruptions from accidental audience members in her work. When asked about this, Prigge-Pienaar said

“we had observers but no one was brave enough to interrupt... maybe subconsciously I choose spaces where this can’t happen ... who knows”. In the previous discussion on the site-specific approach, Duckler and Kwon emphasise the importance of the involvement of the accidental and planned audience, specifically in bringing a site-specific performance to actuality. Thus, the lack of accidental audience members in Prigge-Pienaar’s work is intriguing to me, specifically with regard to the implications that this might have for the work itself. Therefore the question that I propose at this time, particularly in the case of this lack of accidental audience, is how does the level of unpredictability usually attached to a site-specific performance become affected by the lack of accidental audience members at the site? This is a point that will be discussed in relation to my practical study, specifically in 4.6.3 *Removing the relationships*.

### **3.5 Summary**

Within the theatre discourse, practitioners have a loose regard for the use and understanding of the terms space and site. With very little to differentiate between these terms, the opinions of practitioners, theorists and sociologists Wilkie, De Certeau, Madanipour and McAuley were included in order to gain insight into the use and understanding of these terms. Identifying space as a far more general concept than site, it was deduced that space can possibly transform into site(s) through physical actions such as performance.

Regarding spatial directors Artaud, Grotowski, Malina and Beck, the following were highlighted as essential areas of interest in their individual approaches to space: Artaud envisioned an engulfing theatre, whereby the separation between reality and life would finally be perforated. Suggesting that there was a need to change the audience/performer relationship in order to achieve this, Grotowski could be seen developing this idea further. This was achieved by actively reconditioning the state of the theatre space and stripping the theatre experience of all that was considered unnecessary. Removing the seating and stage, Grotowski created spaces where the audience and performers could co-exist, without the traditional audience/performer barrier of the proscenium arch theatre.

Although Grotowski never intended to physically touch or engage with his audience, Schechner’s approach was the complete opposite. Interested in the possibilities of an active participatory audience, Schechner devised an approach through which to activate the audience and encourage their involvement in the performances. These were labelled as single, local and multi-focus. Another contribution that developed from Schechner’s work was his interest in finding or creating specific spaces for each performance. Malina and Beck developed a similar interest. Working under the name The Living Theatre, Malina and Beck’s primary concern was to stir the audience into active social awareness by immersing them in the action. Finally moving into a public space, it was in *Six Public Acts* that Malina and Beck broke away from negotiating space to exploring a site-based approach to creating a performance.

Four approaches collected under this overarching term, site-based performance, are *site-adjusted*, *site-generic*, *site-sympathetic* and *site-specific* performance. In short, a site-adjusted approach to performance may use different sites, re-adjusting the performance each time to the site. A site-generic approach looks for similar sites so that the performance undergoes very little changes. A site-sympathetic approach to

performance uses the site to enhance its already scripted performance, but very rarely depends on the specifics of the site. Finally, a site-specific approach to performance places the site at the centre of the approach, ensuring that the entire performance is made in response to the sites specifics. Understanding these approaches broadly, local directors Hanekom, Coetzer and Prigge-Pienaar are able to provide light on these individual approaches by discussing them in relation to their own works. Hanekom discusses the implications of introducing generic sites into her productions *Lot*, *Betèsda* and *Babbel*, particularly with regard to the adjustment that these performances might undergo as a result of them. Equally concerned with the adjustment of performances, Coetzer explores the possibility for site-specific performances to become site-adjusted over time, specifically from the perspective of site-specific film. Lastly, Prigge-Pienaar focuses on the developing concern with regard to the exclusivity of the site in site-specific performances, attempting to preserve the approach by creating work that is created in and from the site. One question that this final discussion on Prigge-Pienaar proposes, however, is how does the level of unpredictability usually attached to a site-specific performance become affected by the lack of accidental audience members in the site? This will be explored in the practical project that follows.

In the light of this initial exploration of the different site-based approaches, four questions have been proposed for my practical study, focusing specifically on the site-specific approach to creating a performance. These questions relate to (1) the purpose of the site-specific approach, (2) the director's role in this approach, (3) the possibility for this approach to have a list of identifiable characteristics and (4) the implications that an additional site might have on the nature of a site-specific performance. Hoping to address these questions, in the following chapter I will provide insight into the practical component of this study, specifically with regard to the findings that became evident during the practical process.

## **Chapter Four: Investigating a site-specific approach to performance from a director's perspective**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In the light of Gleave's (2011:11) view of site-specific performances as being "restrictive" (as discussed in 3.3.3), specifically with regard to their inability to exist in alternative sites, this practical study focuses on developing a personalised site-specific approach to performance. The potential of Coetzer's work to start as site-specific and then later become site-adjusted and the apparent lack of accidental audience members in Prigge-Pienaar's work also led to identifying the following four questions as central to the practical study; (1) What are the effects of moving a site-specific performance from its original site to a secondary site on the relationships of the performance? (2) What is the purpose of a site-specific approach? (3) What are possible characteristics of a site-specific approach? (4) What is the director's role in this approach?

Using four provisional parameters in the layout of the practical project, the initial design for the practical study was as follows. First, the project would be completed in a six-week time span – rehearsals, performances and semi-structured interviews included. Second, a group of 10 students would be used as performers. Third, a performance of thirty minutes would be created in and for one specific site, and then be performed again in a second site in order to investigate my fourth research question<sup>68</sup>. Three final performances of the completed project would take place. Finally, a set of questionnaires would be distributed amongst the audience members in order to accumulate data, which could possibly contribute towards my discussion on the discoveries of the practical study with regard to the research questions mentioned above<sup>69</sup>. To begin this discussion on the evaluation of the practical study (creative process, reflections and revelations) it is important to address the first two questions proposed in the previous chapter, namely the purpose of a site-specific approach to performance and the role of the director in a site-specific approach to performance.

#### **4.1.1 Identifying the purpose of a site-specific performance**

Identifying the purpose of site-specific performance cannot be as easily defined as concepts such as "realism" or "naturalism", especially since the latter can be seen as performance styles with a "distinctive appearance, design [and] arrangement" (Soanes & Hawker 2006:1031), and the former as an approach which is seen as "a way of doing something" (Soanes & Hawker 2006:41). By referring to site-specific as an approach rather than a style, it suggests that the work being created by practitioners, whilst sharing certain principles, could vary in appearance. For this reason it is possible to see various ways of viewing the purpose of this particular approach documented by practitioners.

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<sup>68</sup> It was ensured that the same audience would be able to see the primary performance (at the first site) and the secondary performance (at the second site) on the same night. The duration of the production was estimated to be 1 hour and 15 minutes.

<sup>69</sup> Many of the questions in the questionnaires were directed at gaining knowledge of the audience's opinions on site-specific performance, particularly with regard to its potential to be performed in multiple places; however, the results from the questionnaires showed that the audience members were commenting primarily on the pure aesthetics of the performance, rather than on the investigation itself. In the light of this they were not used in the study.

Stephan Koplowitz (in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:83) explains that site-specific works “[s]hould make people think differently about the site they are experiencing as well as about the art itself. It should affect people’s feelings about themselves in that site and should inform their future interactions with the site”. Nick Kaye (2000:183) also emphasises the audience’s experience in the space as a primary purpose of site-specific performance by stating that it is “the viewer’s shifting awareness of his or her relationships to the work and space in which it is sited” that should be central. Other purposes that are mentioned by practitioners are the need for work to bring out the social implications of space (Boal 1998:3), and work that “dissolves” in the space (Coetzer 2013). Finally, Kaye (2000:53) explains that the purpose of site-specific work is to create “a relationship between elements which amplifies the fundamental exchange between site and performance”.

The majority of the opinions cited above seem to focus on the relationships formed in the site, whether it be philosophical, historical, socio-political, anthropological and/or architectural. As mentioned in the delineation of the study, my approach to site-specific performance focused on an architectural exploration of the site.

#### **4.1.2 The position of the director in a site-specific performance**

Based on my limited knowledge of the application of site-based performance, my understanding of the director’s approach to site-specific performance is based primarily on the work created by site practitioner Nicola Hanekom, as mentioned in 3.3.1 Hanekom (2013) describes her approach to site-based performance as having a strong element of script writing, which she constructs “with a clear picture in mind of the type of site it would need ... (pool, field with fence, deserted cell phone tower)”. Whilst Hanekom is not the only practitioner to merge unconventional spaces with text, see Jay Pather’s *Qaphela Ceasar*<sup>70</sup>; Brett Bailey’s *Orpheus*<sup>71</sup> and The Mothertongue Project<sup>72</sup>, it was Hanekom’s work that first introduced me to text-based performance in the Western Cape. Unlike Hanekom, Coetzer and Prigge-Pienaar are strongly influenced by dance-based theatre and physical theatre. Hanekom (2013) also acknowledges that her introduction to site-based performance (which was with the Dutch company *de Apple*) was not from the point of view of a written script, but rather strongly influenced by physical theatre:

It was rough going, hard work, especially physically. I noticed that there was very little dialogue in the pieces from the Netherlands [...] I thought I would like to try my hand at writing and directing and suspected that our audiences might need more text to understand.

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<sup>70</sup> *Qaphela Ceasar* was a contemporary adaptation of William Shakespeare’s *Julius Ceasar*. Inviting a multitude of performers from schools all over Cape Town, Pather first placed this new work in the Cape Town city hall in 2010. In 2012, however this same work was seen placed in the old stock market in Johannesburg as part of the annual Dance umbrella program.

<sup>71</sup> *Orpheus* or *Orfeus* is one of Bailey’s site-based pieces. Taking place outside the confinements of a gallery or theatre, Bailey’s interest for this piece was to push theatre conceptually, as well as invite the audience to experience performance in a more rural open setting. This performance was intended for an international tour which took place in 2012.

<sup>72</sup> Created as a woman’s art collective, the mothertongue project sees a multitude of different female artists coming together in order to educate and explore the position of women in society. Locating its projects within the stories of women in local communities, their projects not only aim to provide a voice for the women but also merge community and conventional theatre into one. One way in which they intended to do this was by placing their audiences in two taxis, this performance was known as *Uhambo*.



Being better acquainted with word-based performance (having experienced two years of directing it prior to this project), I was intrigued about the potential of writing a script for a site, as Hanekom is seen doing. However, unlike Hanekom, who uses generic sites as the motivation for her written scripts, my interest lay in writing a word-based text in response to one specific site. As I usually approach a theatre performance with a script, characters, set design, costumes, music and a fully constructed timeline of how to progress through the rehearsal process, many of my inherent ideas about directing and constructing a performance had to be abandoned. Furthermore, coming from a theatre background, which emphasises the role of the director as meaning maker (Worthen 2004:2), there were numerous occasions in the process of this practical project when I had to question my role as director in a site-specific approach. This theatre background definitely hampered a number of decisions that were made early in the process, particularly in the choices made with regard to my initial approach to the site, the conceptualisation of the performance, as well as the treatment of the audience. While I was conscious of the fact that I was abandoning the traditional theatre space, with its predefined stage, auditorium, lights and singular view, my actual directorial approach to the construction of the performance changed very little. Since I approached the site as I would a rehearsal room, many of the decisions that were made in the introductory rehearsals were placed onto the site, instead of being in response to the site. Once I saw the implications of this, I realised that there had to be a paradigm shift in my approach as director, especially in order to explore a personalised site-specific approach to performance fully. This shift came in the form of abandoning the concept of “director” and stepping into the role of “facilitator”.

The primary difference between these two roles is the approach that I had towards the site. Instead of forcing certain exercises, concepts and ideologies onto the site, I began to respond directly to the site. In essence, the site became the “director” of the performance; I merely managed or guided the performers and that which came out of the site into a constructed form. Part of understanding the shift from director to facilitator was becoming aware of the paradigm shift that a site-specific approach asks, which only came about during the rehearsal process. For this reason, many of the preliminary decisions that are referred to here still reflect the viewpoint of a conventional theatre director. Bearing this paradigm shift in mind, it must be said that I have incorporated traditional theatre elements of props, costumes and sound as sub-headings only as a tool to navigate through my findings in a logical order. Within the actual process, categories such as these were not considered independently, nor did they define how the site was approached.

## **4.2 Securing the site**

*How does one go about choosing a site, or does a site choose you?* There are numerous ways in which a practitioner can become interested in a particular site. Boal, for instance, specifically chose public and populated spaces so that he could initiate a type of social commentary through unplanned spectacles (Cohen-Cruz 1988:3). Three other approaches were mentioned in discussions with site practitioners Prigge-Pienaar, Coetzer and Hanekom. Prigge-Pienaar (2013) speaks of investigating possible sites either in a group, by giving suggestions of sites of interest and then going to investigate them, or by using a site that she had found interesting in passing. Coetzer (2013) likes to identify music first and then go on a site ‘hunt’, playing



the music in the different sites in order to find a special connection between the two elements. Lastly, as mentioned previously, Hanekom's (2013) approach involves devising a word-based text with a specific site in mind, then introducing the site into the rehearsal process "as early as you can afford to introduce it financially". While these approaches are three of the many that are being explored in the Western Cape, their diversity shows how variable the approach to site-specific performance can be. Because of my interest in the possible ways in which one can become drawn to particular sites, my initial approach to the selection of the site was far more concerned with the practicalities of the site, rather than the site itself. Since all the rehearsals had to take place in the site, two elements that factored very strongly into my decision about sites were (1) availability and (2) accessibility.

I am usually attracted to what Pearson (in Wilkie 2004:142) refers to as an abandoned site, particularly because of its isolation from the public eye and common themes of neglect, decay and desertion. Seeing this as a tendency of mine, I decided to adjust the way I encountered sites, making room to come across them unexpectedly instead of actively seeking them. This resulted in me gradually becoming interested in what could be referred to as public sites. While I agree that using categorical terms such as "public site", "private site", "abandoned site" and "working site"<sup>73</sup> can be restrictive, theorists such as Pearson (2010) and Madanipour (2003) incorporate these terms to illustrate how space has become structured by society's rules and regulations. If I was to use these categories to identify my site, on a very superficial level I would use public and working as two terms in combination to describe the current status of the site that I finally considered to base my project in.

After deciding on the area surrounding the entrance to the main library of Stellenbosch University (the JS Gericke Library) as my primary site, several aspects had to be addressed in the finalisation of this site. From the start I was drawn to the strong architectural features and everyday use of the site, and the Library also held the potential to explore a number of the relationships I had discovered in Artaud (1958), Grotowski (1997) and Schechner (1968), which will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.5.2, Defining site relationships. Also, as a result of the nature of the project being a research exercise, there were logistical aspects that had to be considered with regard to the feasibility of the site.

The first logistical aspect was the availability of the site. Because the rehearsal process for site-specific performance has to occur in the site, the site had to be accessible on a daily basis to a certain extent. In reflection, this concern about being able to conduct daily rehearsals in the site could be seen as part of my need to conform to the existing paradigm of conventional theatre practices. The second logistical aspect was the securing of the site administratively. I was unaware that permission had to be given to use the site, and a number of rehearsals went by in the site without officials being informed. When permission was finally granted, secondary parameters had to be put into place as a result of the received permission. Although frustrating at first, these secondary parameters led me to the third logistical aspect of the practical study, being ownership. I was becoming increasingly aware of how owned space actually is, as well as the

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<sup>73</sup> Refer to 3.1.1 for the discussion of these terms in more detail.

implications of this ownership (Madanipour 2003). As a result, a number of negotiations had to be entered into with resident individuals all demanding ownership of the site. Most numerous of these ‘residents’ were the students, vagrants and crickets, all of whom insisted on contributing towards improvisations and performances. Although these three points were the logistical elements reviewed during the finalisation of the site, a large aspect of the selection was based on the physical features of the site and the interaction of the pedestrians with the site.

After use of the primary site had been confirmed, time was devoted to the selection of the secondary site. While administrators had to be involved in getting permission for the use of the second site, no rehearsals were to occur in this site, making its availability much easier to organise. As I was specifically looking for a site with stairs<sup>74</sup>, three options were identified, namely the Drama Department of Stellenbosch University, the Stellenbosch Town Hall, and the Conservatoire of Stellenbosch University. Based on availability and location, the Conservatoire became the best secondary site for the project. Because this site had so many similar qualities to that of the Library, I anticipated that the production would simply become site-adjusted when performed in this secondary space. Although I pre-empted this conclusion, it was only by approaching the primary site holistically, considering the specific history, sounds, usage, people and architecture, that my understanding of a site-specific approach became clearer.

#### **4.2.1 A brief overview of the history of the Library site**

Built in 1983, the JS Gericke Library<sup>75</sup> was one of three libraries to be built on the Stellenbosch University property, the other two being the CL Marais Library and the Carnegie Library (Van der Merwe, Van der Walt, Gericke & Schoombee 1994:16). Whilst very little has been published on the history of the site, Neil Hendriksz<sup>76</sup> has done a great deal of research on the history and was able to draw my attention to two points worth considering: (1) who was originally granted access to the Library and (2) the original aesthetics of the Jan Marais Square. Hendriksz (2013) comments on the first issue, explaining that:

In the years when I was a student (1977), no student was ever denied access into the library. However the only students of colour that I remember coming into the library in those days were the black students who came from King William’s Town. Having said this, as far as I know no coloured people were allowed into the library unless they were workers and there is no existing record of it ever being considered as a possibility.

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<sup>74</sup> Taking into account that some Western Cape practitioners move their site-specific works to similar sites, as seen in Nicola Hanekom’s trio (Lot, Betésda and Babbel), a decision was made to look for a site with similar architectural features to that of the Library.

<sup>75</sup> Named after the Reverend JS (Kosie) Gericke, the building of the Stellenbosch University Library began in 1981 and completed in 1983. Being built in the only available central position on the campus, the officials responsible for the Jan Marais square (beneath which the Library is built) were concerned about the aesthetics of the Library in the open space. Placing importance on the specific aesthetic of the surrounding buildings, they insisted that the Library be built under ground in order to hide the “multi-story building” and preserve the architecture of the surrounding space (SU Library Site 2011)

<sup>76</sup> Hendriksz is one of the resident faculty librarians at the JS Gericke Library. Greatly involved in Ancient Studies, Visual Arts, Geography & Environmental Studies, History, Sociology and Social Anthropology, Hendriksz also holds many of the original documents relative to the history of Stellenbosch University, particularly with regard to the construction of the JS Gericke and Carnegie Libraries.

This question of “denied access” or “accepted access” was an element strongly identified during the rehearsal process. However, this identification was not concerned primarily with the implications as a result of race, which Hendriksz referred to, but rather status (vagrants versus students or students versus non-students). The second point of interest that Hendriksz (2013) touches on concerns the Jan Marais Square, especially with regard to its aesthetics, rules and loopholes:

Having laid the square in honour of what Jan Marais did for the varsity, there were a number of promises that were made to Marais. They [the University] were not allowed to build on the square, but could build on the peripheries. However there was a loophole, they didn’t say anything about building underneath... it’s a pity because the square was beautiful prior to what it looks like now. I came here as a first year in ’76 and it was really a nice area – think Paris, one of those beautiful grassy gardens with walkways crossing it – no concrete ... no bricks. In that sense the building of the library was disappointing, but it kept the building central to the campus. Unfortunately the square was meant to be put back as it was ... it’s terrible... just a lot of bricks now... because at that stage a member of the council or someone was part of a brick business, so everything was bricked in Stellenbosch.

While this brief history of the JS Gericke Library and its surrounds filtered into the performance from the preliminary stages of the design, casting and rehearsal process, it was by actively involving the site as the central character in the performance that the focus began to shift away from the history of the site, to the architecture of the site and its current usage. Hopefully the discussion that follows will illustrate this gradual development.

#### **4.3 Considering the cast**

Following the decision to use the JS Gericke Library and Conservatoire as my primary and secondary sites, a basic construction of the performance I intended for the Library site was formed, titled *Bibliography*, and casting was done to suit this initial idea. As I was interested in the workshop process behind creating a text-based script for the site<sup>77</sup>, my passion to investigate the potential of physical theatre in the site was equally strong. Taking this into consideration, auditions were constructed around specific character types found in the Library site. After identifying four specific groups of people on the steps, the “hot” chicks, jocks, vagrants and cleaners, students from the Drama Department of Stellenbosch University could volunteer to audition for these specific types of characters<sup>78</sup>. Constructing improvisations that focused specifically on these characters, students were assessed on (1) characterisation abilities, (2) improvisational skills in a site, (3) their physical skills and (4) their possible theoretical contribution. Following a very traditional approach towards auditioning, call-backs were held in the Library site to see how they would manage with the change of performance space. As a result of these call-backs, I decided to cast 15 students instead of the 10 that I had originally anticipated. The change in the size of the cast was a decision made on the basis of the nature of the

<sup>77</sup> Although I was interested in creating a text for the site, I was wary of it becoming site-sympathetic – especially since the only examples of site-based performance using a word-based text were those created by Nicola Hanekom.

<sup>78</sup> As I was an MA student in the Stellenbosch Drama Department, I asked for permission to use students currently studying in the Department when I obtained ethical clearance.

site<sup>79</sup>. In the light of the casting process, the majority of my decisions I made were done from the viewpoint of a theatre director. Reflecting on this, and enquiring how other site practitioners such as Coetzer (2013) potentially cast such performances, I now realise that because the site inevitably determines the type of performance that will emerge, casting in this way essentially is redundant. More importantly, casting in this way – based primarily on physical appearance of the performers – could be seen to have certain implications for the rehearsals; this will be discussed in the following section.

#### **4.4 Rehearsals**

Although theorists and practitioners describe site-specific work as being “wholly inspired by a specific place” (Koplowitz in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:75), very little information can be found on the actual requirements for the rehearsal process. Referring back to my theoretical study for support, I recognised the importance placed on land artist’s approach to preparing a site, specifically explored by Robert Smithson, Richard Long and Dennis Oppenheim (Tufnell 1977:16). Emphasising the site as a place of creation and exhibition, *Spiral jetty*, *A circle in the Andres* and *Parallel stress*<sup>80</sup> were three works epitomising the importance of the site in the creative process. Unable to remove their works from their chosen sites in order to work on them elsewhere, all preparation had to occur solely in the site. In this regard, practitioner Samantha Prigge-Pienaar (2013) explains that, in order for a work to be classified as site-specific, “all rehearsals have to be done in the chosen site”.

##### **4.4.1 Preparing for the performance**

As I was interested in the practical application of the specific theories discussed in the literature study in order to investigate a personalised approach to site-specific performance, preparation for the performance focused initially on reviewing Artaud (1958), Grotowski (1997) and Schechner’s (1968) practical contributions. Specific aspects included in the performance planning were Artaud’s audience immersion, Grotowski’s “poor theatre” and Schechner’s local focus, single focus and multi-focus. These theoretical contributions formed the foundation of the practical study and were referred to continuously in order to ensure theoretical stability within the production. Another aspect introduced at this preliminary stage of the process was the placement of spatial parameters in the site. Knowing that the entire Library site could not be included in the performance, architectural parameters were put into place in order to specify where the performance would take place. Reflecting back on this process, it can be said that, by “securing” the site by forcefully deciding to isolate the stairs, bridge, bicycle racks, artworks and flowerbeds, I was not allowing the site to guide me in the process of selection, but rather forcing what I would like to be highlighted. Trying to “control” the site, as I would do a rehearsal room, my actions show how I was still approaching the site from the mind-set of a theatre director. It should be kept in mind, however, that this was my initial approach to blocking the site for *Bibliography*, and that this approach would become altered dramatically during the actual rehearsals.

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<sup>79</sup> When a larger group of performers was brought to the site, there was an instant “hand in glove” moment, when the site appeared more comfortable than I had anticipated with a larger cast.

<sup>80</sup> See images 11, 13 and 16 in Addendum A.

*Bibliography*, in the initial preparatory stages, focused on the current usage of the site, specifically the types of individuals occupying the site. Instead of incorporating the architecture, sounds and history into this preliminary design, the idea for the performance remained drawn towards the occupation of the individuals present on the Library steps. This was a flaw that I invited into the preliminary design as a director on the basis of a subjective opinion on what to include and regard as important in the site, and what to ignore. Understanding now that site-specific is a holistic approach, in which the sounds, people, architecture and history inform one another as well as construct the socio-political context of the site, my decision to isolate the “people” of the site could be seen as another way in which I was subconsciously trying to control the site. Although I agree that part of creating a performance using a site-specific approach means that the elements of the site must be looked at holistically, I found that, whilst the site’s sounds, architecture, people, history and current usage informed one another, they were not necessarily brought out equally within the performance itself. Similarly, by working in response to the site, instead of placing a predetermined idea of what I as the director thought would look best in the site, the site essentially determined what the performance eventually would focus on. In the process that I followed, becoming sensitive to the responses of the site was something that I consciously had to develop, since my natural inclination was to create order, stability and certainty – three words that do not necessarily exist in site-specific performance. While these three words had certain implications for the preliminary decisions made during this process, it was by interacting with the site that I was able to change my approach to performance, especially as a director. Considering the decisions made will provide better clarity on this point.

#### **4.4.2 Private and group rehearsals**

The rehearsal process was constructed in order to manage (1) the size of the site and (2) the current usage. As I was aware that rehearsals would take place in a public site, private rehearsals<sup>81</sup> were set aside in order to construct relevant improvisations, while group rehearsals<sup>82</sup> were used to explore improvisations practically. Both these rehearsal processes led to the investigation of the site; however for discussion purposes I differentiate between the two. In reflection, these private and group rehearsal categories were constructed as a result of my initial ideas surrounding the role of the director in the creative process, however the discussion that follows will hopefully illuminate this further.

The primary focus of the private rehearsals lay on the documentation of observations and construction of improvisations. Investing in a director/site relationship, these rehearsals, which occurred daily, were seen as necessary in the beginning stages of the project in order to expand on the preliminary performance design of *Bibliography*. In retrospect, these private rehearsals can also be referred to as observation sessions, as my primary aim for this reserved time was to collect information on the site’s sounds, occupants and current

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<sup>81</sup> Private rehearsals refer to separate rehearsals between the site and me. These were usually conducted during the day, when I could observe the use of the site and construct relevant improvisations. The duration of these rehearsals was usually two to three hours.

<sup>82</sup> Group rehearsals were those conducted with the cast, the site and me. This was where improvisations and observations could be explored practically by the cast in order to generate material for the production. These lasted three to four hours and the entire cast was expected to be in the site, either exploring it independently or working in a group facilitated by me.

occurrences. It was during these observation periods that I first became interested in the use of found sound, which came in the form of found dialogue<sup>83</sup>. Whilst it was only the preparatory work explored during these private rehearsals, group rehearsals were responsible for the practical execution.

Initially responsible for the practical development of the improvisations constructed in the private rehearsals, group rehearsals involved the participation of the performers. I used improvisations to slowly introduce the performers to the specific features of the site, and many of these introductory rehearsals focused less on the construction of the performance and more on the creation of a physical vocabulary. Early on in this rehearsal process I began to see the importance of the physical body in the space, specifically with regards to the body's ability to understand the site using touch and physically experiencing the temperature and sounds of the site. This bodily interaction eventually even affected the nature of my improvisations. Constructing improvisations without the performers in the site, certain expectations were made with regard to the outcomes of these improvisations. It was evident, however, that as soon as the performers were invited to explore these improvisations that these outcomes were changed. In light of this, a decision had to be made with regard to the effectiveness of the two separate rehearsal approaches.

Although I originally designed the two approaches to be compatible, the two rehearsal objectives increasingly became detached in the course of the rehearsals. The work produced during these independent rehearsals was seen as removed and nonsensical, leaving little room for the unexpected and personal exploration of the performers. Finally deciding to remove the private rehearsals from the design, my attention focused primarily on the natural/unforced interactions of the performers in and with the space. In doing this, I removed the director as the centre of my approach to the site, and placed the site in the role of the director instead, allowing a paradigm shift to begin to take place. Once I disregarded my initial need for a written script, my attention became drawn to the unique physical language that was beginning to develop in each performer in response to the site. As the performers' understanding of the site began to grow, so did the development of an entirely different production, which I began to refer to as *Glitch*.

#### **4.4.3 From *Bibliography* to *Glitch***

Site-specific performances are conceived for, and conditioned by, the particulars of found spaces... They manifest, celebrate, confound or criticise location, history, function, architecture [and] microclimate...they are the interpretation of the found and fabricated (Pearson in Kaye 1996:211).

In the above quote, Pearson specifically draws attention to the diverse ways in which practitioners can respond to a single site. As I became aware of the limitations of the design making up *Bibliography*, such opinions on the site-specific approach were sought in order to provide clarity and grounding for the practical investigation. Furthermore, once I started addressing the site-specific criteria listed in the Wrights & Sites diagram in Section 3.3, the rehearsals naturally began to gravitate towards the site's architectural design,

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<sup>83</sup> By found dialogue I am referring to the documentation of discussions between the occupants (students, lecturers and cleaners) that took place on the stairs. These would later be incorporated into the production.



found objects, sounds and accidental occurrences. Engaging with the site on three different levels as “site as story-teller”, “site as symbol” and “site as structure” (Wilkie 2004:158), the production that began to develop focused more on what naturally came out of the site, instead of on a preconceived idea of what the site was and who occupied it. Although Wrights & Sites offer characteristics for site-specific performance, it is important to emphasise now that these characteristics are not conclusive of the approach, but rather a starting point from which the final performance of *Glitch* evolved as well as a personalised site-specific approach.

*Glitch* was a term first used during a discussion with the performers, it was a term chosen to describe not only a specific type of person found in the site, but also the type of physical language that was beginning to come out of rehearsing in the site. Defined as “a sudden fault or failure” (Soanes & Hawker 2006:428), ‘glitch’ was a term that was specifically used to refer to a type of person who, for some reason, is unable to become socially accepted within a specific group or community<sup>84</sup>. The idea of being a ‘glitch’ was also fuelled by the comments made by the students who asked the performers whether or not “they knew that they were weird”. Another element strongly influencing this idea of being a “glitch” in society was emphasised by the idea of the Library steps becoming a symbol of student and social hierarchy. Observations made during rehearsals made it clear that the students displayed distinct hierarchical interactions on the steps, especially in the way they positioned themselves physically, as well as the volume at which they spoke. By emphasising this hierarchy between the performers, an attempt was made to draw the audience’s (planned and accidental) attention to the levels of hierarchy naturally implemented on a day-to-day basis, not only on the Library stairs, but also in every social situation.

Finally, the structure of the site also contributed to the eventual development of *Glitch*. Wrights & Sites (in Wilkie 2004) and Pearson (in Kaye 1996) both place importance on the architectural features of a site. In *Glitch* many of the initial physical signs making up the performance came from the first improvisations that explored the textures, sounds and found objects of the Library site. Not only did a physical mannerism come from these first site/performer explorations, which was manifested in a specific type of walk, but the performers were constantly drawn to the ability to hide and then reappear out of nowhere. Through this daily investigation of the site, *Glitch* could be seen drawing attention not only to the architectural features of the site, but also the current condition of the site. Consequently, with this attention to the broken bricks came the need for authorities to intervene and improve the current condition of the site, causing challenges in the final stages of the rehearsal process.

#### **4.4.4 Challenges in rehearsals**

A list of complications seems to accompany a site-specific performance. Two particular challenges affecting my project were the accidental audience and maintenance services. Because the rehearsal process was attached to the site, these challenges could influence the rehearsals for an indefinite amount of time. In retrospect, accepting that such challenges would arise and being able to accommodate them into the

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<sup>84</sup> I was specifically drawn to one female student who arrived daily on the Library steps dressed in full leathers and platform shoes, it was interesting to see how the “conventional” looking students interacted with her. Often sniggered at, whispered about or blatantly ignored, this girl would sit in the strangest of places, behind the dustbins and banisters, out of sight from the rest of the crowd.



performance was a decision that I had to be comfortable with as director before attempting a site-specific project. Knowing this and understanding its implications are two very different things, especially when all I knew about conducting, planning and managing a rehearsal process originated from the confinements of a traditional rehearsal room. Whilst initially referring to these as *challenges*, it was through reflection that they could be recognised as the aspects that make site-specific work so unique. It is by managing and giving into these challenges of the site that the performance could grow, as it is by remaining responsive to the activities of the site that the performance could potentially avoid stagnation. Addressing these challenges provided a greater understanding of how they had the potential to become the most exciting aspects of a personalised site-specific approach.

Abandoning the existing paradigm regarding the conventional rehearsal environment (which usually occurs daily, at the same time and under the same conditions) was the first challenge during the creative process. While weather conditions can affect the stability of rehearsals, the greatest element that needed to be considered initially was the presence of the accidental audience. While it was expected that attention would be gathered from behaving “differently” in a public site, it is still unusual, in the traditional sense, to rehearse with a constant audience. The performers initially held back in rehearsals, and were unable to fully explore the improvisations, possibly because of insecurity due to being watched by a large gathering of people. As daunting as this was, the residents of the site as well as the performers were able to adjust to the conditions of the site over time. I also had to adjust to the intrusion of being interrupted by these accidental audience members. Within the confines of the rehearsal room one becomes used to a level of focus and discipline. However, if the walls are removed and a number of foreign stimulants are included, the rehearsal process can turn into a fight for the performer’s concentration.

A second, and probably most influential, challenge filtering into the rehearsals and performances was the involvement of the maintenance workers of the University in the site. Through rehearsals, a considerable amount of attention was placed on the condition of the steps and, in extension, of the entire surrounding area (commonly known as the *Rooi Plein*). This resulted in a number of procedures taking place in and around the site. First, the maintenance workers saw to fixing the floodlight attached to the bridge. Having choreographed an entire sequence using silhouettes, timing the sequence intentionally with the setting of the sun, this floodlight proved to be difficult to work around. Enquiring if this floodlight could be switched off at all once again reflects my continual need to try and control the situation as well as the outcome of the performance. By hoping to control the unexpected occurrences of the site, it is clear that my position as facilitator once again was overshadowed by my innate need to direct the situation, reiterating how essential it was to reconsider my position in the site-specific approach.

#### **4.4.5 Props**

There is some thinking that you cannot import anything into a site-specific work that is not in the site already. Yet you import yourself, your imagination, your senses, ideas, so I think you can import other objects. However, a site can easily push away objects that are imported and attention must always be paid to the intention behind the importation (Palmer in Wilkie 2004:156).

Here, Palmer addresses one of my primary concerns, the importation of foreign elements into the site. Weary of the implications that importing sound, lights and props might have on the nature of the site, my initial focus was on the exploration of the found objects in the site. Finding glass bottles, stones, bottle caps, sticks, plastic containers and coffee cups in the Library site, a continuous effort was made to include them in the introductory rehearsals. Although they initially were only included as a tool to help the performers engage with the space, certain found objects, such as the coffee cups, remained present throughout the performance. Including these coffee cups in the performance came about in the form of a game, which we named *Resident Glitch / The Rise of The Glitch*<sup>85</sup>.

*Resident Glitch / The Rise of The Glitch* was a game that was implemented as a result of the increase in the number of coffee cups found in the Library dustbins. When I noticed that the majority of the cups were from the coffee shop *Café go*<sup>86</sup>, a decision was made to focus on collecting these specific cups<sup>87</sup>. While this was a subjective decision made by me, the decision to include these cups was based on three points. First, there was a surplus of *Café go* cups already in the dustbins of the Library site. Secondly, by drawing attention to the specific design of the cup, being predominantly red with a white *Café go* label printed on it, I wanted to include a sense of specific location within the performance. Knowing that students would be familiar with this label and, in turn, with the location of this particular coffee shop, which is the one nearest the Library stairs, I attempted to localise the production even more to the one specific site. Finally, seeing that the majority of the cups in the dustbins were from *Café go*, they represented a distinct monopoly in the amount of cups. Recognising the potential of these found<sup>88</sup> objects, particularly with regard to the social commentary that can be explored in a performance as a result of their inclusion, my understanding of the importance of site-specific performance, particularly its affect in a community setting, was increased<sup>89</sup>. In line with this discussion on found objects, other found elements incorporated into the production of *Glitch* were sounds.

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<sup>85</sup> See Addendum B.

<sup>86</sup> See Image 19 in Addendum A.

<sup>87</sup> Although the majority of the cups were collected from the site, towards the end of the rehearsal process I bought new ones just in case a few cups got damaged during the final performances.

<sup>88</sup> In the Wrights & Sites diagram in Section 3.3, one of the characteristics that they mention under site-specific performance is “found text, objects, actions [and] sounds”. My understanding of “found” is something discovered by chance in the site. It exists in the site naturally and becomes included in the production by chance.

<sup>89</sup> This will be touched on again in the discussion on the formation of the site relationships in Section 4.5.2.

#### **4.4.6 Introducing sound**

The choice to include sound in the performance was one that I grappled with continuously throughout the process. Most sources consulted fail to address the subject of bringing sound into an environment. Instead, practitioners concentrate on the connective nature of the performance to the actual site, emphasising the relationship to specific “noises, actions, people, [and] architecture” (Bennet in Wilkie 2004:28). Unable to identify a hard-and-fast rule on this matter, I decided to investigate Stephan Koplowitz<sup>90</sup>, a practitioner who had included sound in numerous site-specific performances. He had a strong application of musical accompaniment in his works *Dartington*<sup>91</sup> and *Smeaton’s tower*<sup>92</sup>, and I therefore decided to investigate further by contacting him directly. Voicing my concerns about the application of music in site-specific performances, Koplowitz said (2013):

Sometimes, the ambient sounds of a site are a stronger choice than imposing some other fabricated sound... overall, yes, I believe composed music can be added to the site but it has to be done carefully and with the site completely in mind...

Taking into account the information received on this matter, my deciding factor inevitably came from investigating the actual site. Since the site is used every year for productions put on by the University residences, music is no foreigner to the space. However, having experienced the natural sounds of the site I also wanted to create soundscapes that could remain relevant to the specific space in order to highlight the space, and not draw attention away from it. Because I was interested in exploring music in the site, two tracks were specifically compiled using sampled sounds of the site. Knowing a DJ who enjoys sampling music, I invited him to the site to hear and see what type of music would best suit the site. Deciding to sample the sounds of the site – talking, distant voices and playing with a coffee cup at the site – we assembled the sounds into two tracks. These became known as the “Awkward song” and the “Coffee cup song”. Referring to them as the “Awkward song” and the “Coffee cup song”, emphasis was placed on the use of site sounds in an edited format. This addition of sampled sounds from the Library steps was incorporated to localise the music to the Library site, rather than creating soundscapes that would work in opposition to the site. Having said this, a pop song was also included in the performance as a result of an experience I had on the Library stairs. During one of my private observation rehearsals, a student came out from the Library for a smoke break. Sitting a good distance from me he began playing a song on his cell phone. I took note of the song and decided to play with this idea later in the rehearsal. Taking caution in the choice and application of music, fearing that it might alter the nature of the site, I tried to balance the existing sounds of the site with the pre-recorded tracks.

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<sup>90</sup> Stephan Koplowitz is currently the dean of the Sharon Disney Lund School of Dance and a member of the faculty at the California Institute of the Arts. A director/choreographer/media-artist, Koplowitz is a distinct contributor to the first book on site-specific choreography, *Site Dance*. Koplowitz has been involved in over 20 site-specific and site-adjusted works in collaboration with his site-touring company, TaskForce.

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdiUNTCQTfY>

<sup>92</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mjrjpmxE\\_Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mjrjpmxE_Y)

Although I am still hesitant about adding sound to a site-specific performance, I have come to the conclusion that it is the practitioner's personal taste and approach to site-specific performance that ultimately will affect this decision. While my approach to the use of music in the site stemmed from my initial interest in the 'found sounds' of the Library site, I am aware that there are a plethora of ways in which practitioners can approach sound in a performance of this nature. I have already mentioned Koplowitz's approach to the use of music in the site, and found that Coetzer is another practitioner whose work can be seen strongly influenced by music. As previously discussed<sup>93</sup>, Coetzer's approach to site-based performance involves selecting music first, and then identifying a site. Based on the order of Coetzer's approach (music before site), one could begin an entirely new discussion on the extent of what is allowed to be imported into a performance when following a site-specific approach. However, I was content with my decision to use additional music for this particular performance, and this is something that practitioners would have to reconsider with every new site, particularly since the music develops a distinct relationship with the site.

#### **4.4.7 Costumes**

Four aspects were kept in mind when designing the costumes: (1) the strong architectural features of the site, (2) the current trends followed by the students, (3) practicalities and, finally, (4) the size of the space. As the costumes were only introduced in the final stages of the rehearsal process a number of the decisions made with regard to the costumes relied on the development of the performance itself. Using image 20 in Addendum A as a depiction of the costumes, I will discuss the specific costume choices and reasoning for them.

Two aspects that contributed towards the design of the costumes were (1) the architecture of the site and (2) the current fashion styles of the occupants of the site. I was intent on including the geometric feel of the site in the designs, hence attention was given to the cuffs, waistbands and collars of the individual designs. Creating sharp contrasts using colour (black and red) and shape also helped to promote a sense of angularity in the costumes. The colour red came from the name of the surrounding area, the *Rooi Plein* (Red Square), and was intentionally included in the colour choices used to design the costumes. The *Café go* cups/hats further contributed to this localisation of the costumes. Further influencing the overall design of the male and female *Glitch* costumes was the current fashion trends of the students in the site. I had noticed the popularity of the "cup-cake" dress among female students, along with tights, whilst many male students wore rolled up shorts that they called Bermuda shorts. The glasses were incorporated as a reference to the learning environment of scholars in the Library. Whilst some site work reflects a simpler usage of costuming, as seen in Koplowitz's *Dartington* and *Smeaton's tower*<sup>94</sup>, I believe it is only by rehearsing in the site and taking all the different elements of the site into consideration that an accurate costume can be designed. The same can be argued when discussing the inclusion of music in a specific site.

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<sup>93</sup> In Section 4.4.1.

<sup>94</sup> In these productions, a simple costume is used in the former, consisting of black pants and blue shirts, and in the latter blue pants with neutral coloured tops.

#### **4.5 The audience**

The auditorium is a natural vessel of representation... see it rather as a spatial machine of a dominant discourse which distances spectators from spectacle and literally 'keeps them in their place', in the dark, sitting in rows, discouraging eye contact and interaction (Pearson in Wilkie 2004:141).

Pearson identifies three features that are commonly implemented in the traditional theatre with regard to the treatment of the audience: (1) the distancing of spectators from the spectacle, (2) confining the audience to rows, and (3) the discouragement of audience interaction. In contrast to this, site-specific performance can be seen approaching the role and placement of the audience in an entirely different way. I was first introduced to the new treatment of the audience in the works of Artaud (1958), Schechner (1968) and Grotowski (1997), and many of my initial thoughts on the abandonment of the traditional audience restrictions therefore were based on my understanding of these practitioners' theories. Coming from a background where I was used to having complete control over the audience – they come in, they sit in the allocated block of red seats, they look forwards and watch – it was difficult to let go of my desire to control the audience. Bearing in mind that the purpose of a site-specific performance is to create commentary in response to “real time, [and] real spaces” (McLucas in Kaye 2000:55), I had to change the way I approached the audience. This meant allowing for (1) an interactive audience/performer space, (2) an unrestricted audience and (3) an encouragement of inter-audience interactions. At this point, the following question can be posed: what is the purpose of the audience in a site-specific performance?

The questioning of the purpose of the audience in the theatre has been a point that practitioners have been developing since the twentieth century (Freshwater 2009:14). Brook (1996:9), in *The empty space*, proposes that one “can take an empty space and call it a bare stage: a man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to engage”. In saying this, Brook is first suggesting that the theatre audience be passive and, secondly, that the audience be placed at the centre of defining a theatrical act. The complete opposite can be seen explored in the site-specific approach towards the audience. Although falling under one label, “audience”, there are two categories in which the audience members involved in a site-specific production can be discussed, namely the planned audience (those spectators who specifically arrived for the performance) and the accidental audience (those who unknowingly came across the performance).

Facing problems of capacity, my greatest difficulty came with the size of my planned audiences. Exceeding the site's capacity, the larger than planned audiences caused the space to become congested, resulting in audience members occupying spaces that were not originally intended for them, which greatly affected the “disappearing acts” of the performance. As a way of avoiding this congestion in the site, I attempted to “organise” the planned audience, insisting from the beginning that they “follow me” at all times. Reflecting on this, it probably was a tool which I employed subconsciously in order to have a level of control over what the audience should be made to see and what should be hidden, ultimately placing restrictions on their experience. Rather, I should have guided them into the space, allowing for a greater level of freedom for

them to choose and explore, instead of becoming caught up in a definite placement that they had to follow. This once again brings me back to the question of the purpose of the audience in a site-specific production.

Seen as debatable, and partly site/performance dependent, the general purpose of having an audience for a performance such as this could be to engage people actively in commentary in order for a response to occur, or for an awareness to become instilled in a group of people (Monk in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:40). Ultimately, this can also be seen as the purpose in traditional theatre, in the sense that a production relates a certain story in order to provoke the audience to question, change or witness. In both cases, the act of commenting becomes redundant without the audience being present. The difference, however, comes in the way that the audience is called to engage with the performance, and the impact of the audience on the performance. Expanding on this idea, site practitioner Meredith Monk<sup>95</sup> (in Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:40) explains that:

A proscenium implies a separation between the performers and the audience. Taking people out of the theatre and including them in the same space as the performers blurs boundaries and transforms experience, exploring notions of time and space.

*Glitch* focused on the active participation of audience members, the purpose of this being to extend the commentary being explored in the performance (on the site, the occupants and behaviour) into the audience. Thus, by involving both the audiences (planned and accidental) in the performance, the specific audience members who were present each night contributed differently to how, where and when commentary was made in the performance. As a result of this, the performance developed, becoming an extended metaphor of its former self, gathering new commentary with every additional audience. Although I originally was reluctant to completely give into the freedom of the audience in the space, it was only in the final performance of *Glitch* that I became fully aware of the potential of the audience and their ultimate purpose in the performance. Contributing to this awareness of the potential of the audience in a site-specific performance was the practical inclusion of Schechner, Boal and Cage's ideas, specifically with regard to spatial arrangements.

#### **4.5.1 Schechner, Boal and Cage's contributions to the audience**

As I was specifically interested in the spatial designs of Schechner's local focus, single focus and multi-focus (Schechner 1968:56), it was interesting to see how the audience interacted with these different occurrences (see Section 3.2.3). Wanting to create room in the production for interactions to occur between the audience/performers and the site, I placed a number of scenes strategically in order to expand practically on Schechner's theories. Beginning with the traditional single focus to draw in the entire audience, it was from this point on that several different focuses became included. The purpose of using these different types of focuses was to encourage the audience to move more freely in the site, to explore the site physically, rather than remaining in one position throughout the performance. Since they were used to watching a production

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<sup>95</sup> American composer, singer, director/choreographer and founder of the interdisciplinary company *The House*, Monk is best known for her pioneering work in the "extended vocal technique" and "interdisciplinary performance".



from a single seated position, it seemed to take time for the audience to understand that in order to see the action they would physically have to move through the space and position themselves in certain ways. My intention behind enforcing this audience interaction with the site was based on my understanding that this would increase the audience's sensory experience of the site and in turn inform their understanding of the performance. However, reflecting on this, there is no way to measure the success of this tactic, and while moving through the site might increase their awareness of the site it does not necessarily mean it is informing the outcome of the audience's experience of the performance. Nevertheless, elements were included in the performance in order to enhance the audience's awareness of the site.

The audience was invited to investigate the space along with the performers by using interactive scenes, and thereby importance was placed on the deconstruction of the traditional performer/audience relationship. Grotowski (in Welford & Schechner 1997:33) specifically pinpoints this in his documentation of his productions<sup>96</sup>, explaining that, by abandoning formal seating, audiences are not positioned to see one perfectly constructed visualisation of a production, but several. In promoting audience intermingling, Grotowski emphasises the potential found in the audiences' watching of fellow audience members' reactions. Positioning the audience in a space that could encourage inter-audience awareness<sup>97</sup> because of its size and confinement led to several moments in *Glitch* that could be seen breaking the traditional space between performers and the audience (planned and accidental), as well as between fellow audience members. This was incorporated specifically in order to encourage the audience to experience the space physically by moving through it and becoming aware of other occurrences taking place in the site. While the inclusion of the planned audience members in such moments inspired a level of unpredictability in the performance, it was the inclusion of the accidental audience that expanded on this further. A primary contributor to the concept of the accidental audience was Augusto Boal<sup>98</sup>.

Although Boal's invisible theatre targeted specific societal issues, his interest in the inclusion of the accidental audience was a starting point for my own curiosity. Placed in a space that encourages constant interruptions, the accidental audience was involved throughout the creative process of *Glitch*. Since the Library was open during the first performance there was a natural increase in the accidental audience members around the Library site. As it was the only performance to occur during the Library's working hours, it was interesting to see how the accidental audience was used unsuspectingly within the first performance. Herding the individual accidental audience members into the Library, the planned audience was drawn deeper into the performance because of the unexpectedness of the inclusion. Incorporating these "chance" occurrences within the performance is similar to the chance technique<sup>99</sup> introduced into happenings

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<sup>96</sup> Grotowski speaks about the performer/audience relationship specifically when discussing *The constant prince* and *Akropolis* (Welford & Schechner 1997:33).

<sup>97</sup> Image 21 in Addendum A shows the space in which the audience was primarily positioned.

<sup>98</sup> By creating real, unplanned disturbances in life, Boal prepared opportunities that invaded normal everyday occurrences, passively providing instances for unknowing audiences to interact with problems and voice their objections (Mason 1992:6).

<sup>99</sup> In short, the chance technique refers to a specific method used by several practitioners during the creation of happenings. Here, choreographers, musicians and artist rely on pure chance to assemble their works, never able to repeat the performances but intrigued nevertheless by the unique process of each individual one (Kirby 1995:38).



by Cage and Kaprow (Sandford 1995:238). Identifying these different theoretical influences within the practical process not only developed my understanding of the different techniques, but also allowed me to see the implications of these theories, particularly with regard to their contribution to the actual development of a personalised site-specific approach. The implications of such chance occurrences not only contribute to making a performance site-specific, but also moment and audience specific.

Another audience type contributing towards this constant development of the performance was the audience which I began to refer to as the planted audience<sup>100</sup>. Introduced to the potential of the planted audience in a rehearsal, I was interested to see how both the accidental audience and the planned audience reacted to this specific scene<sup>101</sup>. The decision to include this in the performance was inspired by an event that happened during a rehearsal and was done in order to comment on the way people naturally react to such disturbances in their space. Taking note of both the accidental audience and planned audience's disgust and comments, which included "just play along, man!", it was interesting to see how the performers had got the audience on their side. Recognising that the performance had been created by predominantly using student interactions, I had considered its potential to become "audience specific"<sup>102</sup> as well. Never intending to relate specifically to an individual group of audience members, I became aware that simply by referencing familiar occurrences on the Library site the students would automatically have greater understanding of the subject matter, as would those whom Boal would target in his performances. However, unlike Boal, whose productions only made sense to an identified audience in order to inspire change in a society, *Glitch* (although more familiar to students) never directed its attention intentionally to a specific group.

Reflecting on this inclusion of the theories of Schechner, Boal and Cage, I am aware that it might appear that the practical project became reliant on the theories instead of the site itself. This was not the case. While I admit that I originally put the theories in place as a type of safety net because of my own insecurities regarding the "correct" way to approach a site-specific performance, the scenes that were finally affected by the theories happened in collaboration with the site, not in isolation. One aspect that I believe was affected by my concern for the theoretical contribution to the project, and something that I would need to reconsider in the future, was the placement and movement of the audience, as well as the role of the audience in a site-specific performance. Audience placement cannot be seen as conventional or consistent within such performances, as ultimately they can become dependent on the nature of the site, and the functioning of the site. In this case, the Library site encouraged a mobile audience, one that was constantly being moved, never in one space for too long. As I started to understand the importance of the purpose of the audience, as well as of their movement in the site, my understanding of the level of dependence that a site-specific performance has on site relationships also began to gain shape.

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<sup>100</sup> This is a term I use to refer to a performer who is planted in the production as an accidental audience member.

<sup>101</sup> The scene I am referring to forms part of the "Bib rush". Ignoring the demands of the clicking performers, the planted performer walks through the audience, going to smoke against the wall.

<sup>102</sup> Boal (in Mason 1992:6) uses this term in a number of his productions to explain how a production could be created with a specific audience in mind. At times, such a production only was relevant to a specific audience.

#### **4.5.2 Defining site relationships**

When you're sitting in your seat in the theatre you never expect to be close to a performer, to feel a performer breathe, to feel a performer sweating... (Murray & Keefe 2007:148).

While land artists were of the first to experiment with an interactive audience, placing importance on the personal experience<sup>103</sup>, Artaud, Grotowski and Schechner were some of the theatre practitioners who continued to investigate the audience's interactive relationship with a performance space. Removing the designated seating, Artaud, Grotowski and Schechner were interested in investigating three possible site/audience/performer interactive relationships. These are identified as the site/performer, site/audience and performer/audience relationships, and a large part of my practical study went into examining these relationships in terms of the impact they have on a performance, as well as how they would become altered at the secondary site. Although these three specific relationships formed the focus in the theoretical study, three additional relationships began to develop during the rehearsal process and performances. Referring to these as the site/accidental audience, planned audience/accidental audience and accidental audience/performer relationships, the discussion that follows will try to clarify the importance of these additional relationships. By dividing these relationships into two categories, namely primary and secondary, the study will discuss at what point each relationship became influential in the development of the site-specific performance.

The site/performer, site/accidental audience and performer/accidental audience relationships developed directly out of the initial rehearsal stage. These relationships formed the primary category and helped draw attention to the importance of site-specific performances being interactive. Failure to develop these primary relationships would result in a performance incapable of breaking the audience/performer boundary established by conventional theatre. In its simplest form, the site/performer relationship is the single relationship upon which the entire performance rests. As I relied predominantly on the outcome of the performer's physical interaction with the site to produce the necessary content and physical language, it was only once the performers were present in the site that the performance began to take shape. Similarly, by interacting with the accidental audience members in the site, the performance was able to explore the possible site/accidental audience and performer/accidental audience relationships. Furthermore, by engaging in these relationships during the rehearsal process, the performance became open to unplanned events that were later included in the final construction of *Glitch*. Another factor that contributed to the performance's continuing evolution was the inclusion of the planned audience in the performances.

The planned audience, which resembles more of a traditional audience, is the core element responsible for the relationships making up the second category. This category comprises the performer/audience, audience/site and accidental audience/planned audience relationships. A large portion of the audience's enjoyment, which was documented in the form of questionnaires, came as a result of the unpredictability of

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<sup>103</sup> Land artists such as Robert Smithson, Richard Long and Dennis Oppenheim encouraged the participation of the viewer in their works. They created works that relied on the personal investigation of the work by the viewer, hence required the passive viewer to begin to walk through the works and explore them physically in order to fully understand their potential (Tufnell 2006:29).

the nature of these relationships in the performance<sup>104</sup>. Because they never knew which space would be “safe” for long, the audience was encouraged by the performance to be in a constant state of awareness, not only of the performers in the space but also of themselves in relation to the space. The accidental audience was another element that the planned audience became aware of during this time. Thus, forming the final relationship of this second category is the accidental audience/planned audience relationship.

Unlike the previously discussed relationships in this second category, the accidental audience/planned audience relationship is entirely site dependent. As it was a public site there was a continuous flow of activity, and *Glitch* therefore was far more susceptible to the exploration of this relationship than a performance exploring an access-controlled site. With the planned audience placed in the centre of the site, in an attempt to immerse them in the action of the performance, the accidental audience arranged themselves spontaneously on the periphery of the Library space. By doing this, the site’s architectural structure allowed for an increased level of visibility between the accidental audience and the planned audience, improving their awareness of one another in the site. Interested in the ‘real’ responses of these accidental audience members who often stumbled onto the performance, it was interesting to see how the planned audience repositioned their focus from the performance itself to see the responses of the accidental audience. Adding to this, it was by observing how the accidental audience naturally reacted to the performance – by moving away or pretending that it was not there – that I began to see a correlation between these natural response of the accidental audience and that of how people usually treated the “glitch” people on the stairs.

In retrospect, the importance of these relationships is not just for the audience to become actively involved in the performance, but rather that they should be incorporated in order for the audience to make sense of the site. Not only do these relationships encourage the audience to gather signs and signals that will help them to order their experience of the site and the meaning of the performance, but by physically engaging with the performers, the site and the accidental audience, the performance is called to develop accordingly. Central to this development was the performers’ ability to adjust to, incorporate and respond organically to the unexpected nature of the involvement of both audience types in the performance. Although I refer to this as a *challenge* for the performers in the above paragraph, this response shows how I am reflecting on this experience from a director’s point of view instead of as a facilitator. Used to the level of control that a director would usually have in a theatre, where the conditions of the theatre were consistent and the outcome to a certain extent reliable, I had to make a personal adjustment in order to see these unplanned occurrences not as *challenges*, but as opportunities for the production to grow. Subsequently, it was by performing *Glitch* in the secondary site that I became aware of how connected the relationships formed in *Glitch* were to the nature of the Library site, and the implications of this when that site was changed.

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<sup>104</sup> Eighty-four percent of the respondents (to questionnaires handed out at the three scheduled performances) commented on the unplanned interactions between the audience, the performers and the non-audience as an aspect greatly increased their involvement in the production. Used to productions that are performed using a finite script, the audience members were interested in the possibility of *Glitch* becoming a different performance each night as a result of the unpredictability brought in through the use of these specific relationships.

## **4.6 Performance 1 and performance 2**<sup>105</sup>

Referring to the performances as performance 1, the Library site, and performance 2, the Conservatoire, the results and observations of the movement of *Glitch* between the two sites will be discussed in this section.

### **4.6.1 Structural discrepancies**

Despite having explored the architecture, sounds, people, objects, use and history of the Library site during the rehearsal process, *Glitch* was intrinsically drawn to the specific architectural features of the site. Whilst the Conservatoire was chosen because of its similarities to the Library site, specifically with regard to its stairs and amphitheatre feel, several scenes from *Glitch* were distinctly displaced as a result of their reliance on the specific structural features of the Library site. Removing the architectural features that usually added to the performers' ability to hide and reappear, the Conservatoire site allowed the audience to view the unusual "behind the scenes" mechanics of the performance. In doing this, the second performance not only drew attention to the dependence that site-specific performances have on their original sites, but also the level of adaption that such performances have to undergo in order to fit into a second site. While the smaller structural features of the site, such as the position of the staircases and walls, altered the performance itself, it was the larger structures, such as the entrances to the Library and the Conservatoire, which ultimately influenced the content of the performance the most.

### **4.6.2 Rejecting content**

Pearson (in Gleave 2011:9) argues that site-specific performances are "inseparable from their sites, [as this is] the only context within which they are intelligible". Never fully understanding the weight of Pearson's comment, it was only during the performance of *Glitch* in the Conservatoire site that I began to see how the content of the performance became unintelligible in specific instances. As mentioned previously, a large part of the construction of *Glitch* relied on the content made available through observations and rehearsals exploring the relationships between the performers, site and accidental audience. In doing so, the performance's purpose was created in response to the Library site, commenting on the specific essence of the site, as well as how people behave and interact in the site. Carrying this purpose embedded in it, *Glitch* was placed directly into the second site. However, with every site comes a system of sounds, usage, architectural features and history that people ordinarily use to understand and make sense of life. Thus, by placing the already constructed performance in a different site, it was only natural that the site's features would impose themselves on the already established purpose of the performance. On the understanding that every site carries a specific history, usage and 'spirit', the following discussion will address two points with regard to the implications that emerged when introducing *Glitch* to the Conservatoire site, being (1) the change in content and (2) the shift in the performance's purpose.

Completed in 1978, the Conservatoire is described as an "ultra-modern building with...exceptional acoustical qualities" (Conservatoire 2011). Seen as a specialised space in terms of its usage, the Conservatoire site (specifically the stairs, entrance and surrounds) are used in the same way a church or sports stadium would be, not continuously but by reservation, bookings or routine. Thus the nature of the

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<sup>105</sup> For full recordings of the performances of *Glitch*, in site one and site two, please refer to Addendum D.

Conservatoire site is very different to the Library site, in the sense that the Library is a transitional space, busy, occupied and central, whereas the Conservatoire is removed, quiet and predominantly unoccupied. It is undeniable that these specific functions of the two sites would impact on the content of the performance in some way, especially since the function of the site would form part of the information structure that an audience member would use to make sense of the experience and the purpose behind the performance. One feature noticeably challenged by this was the use of the found sounds. Originating from the Library site, the constructed found sounds (found dialogue) worked against the quiet nature of the Conservatoire site. By placing this found dialogue in the Conservatoire site, the sequence no longer commented on the types of discussions that took place on the Library stairs, but rather resembled an unclear mass of murmuring. This leads us to the second part of the discussion, namely the implications of the nature of the secondary site for the original purpose of the performance.

Having identified the purpose of *Glitch* as a performance commenting on the occupants in the Library site – how they behave, interact and respond in and to the site – it is clear that the Library site became the most influential participant in the entire project. By removing the presence of the Library, the very nature of the performance began to change because that which was being commented on was no longer there as a foundation. In short, it could be said that, by removing the core purpose of the creation of *Glitch* and performing it in another site, the performance was unable to respond to the site, as it was not relative to the specifics of the Conservatoire site, but rather became placed in the site as a completed version of its former self. This brings me back to the question posed by Koplowitz, which suggests that a production can become reframed.

To a certain extent, I agree with both Koplowitz's and Pearson's comments with regard to the implications of moving a site-specific performance. While it is impossible for the content and purpose of a site-specific production not to become changed by the secondary site (because of the site-specific approach to performance, which at its core responds to the specifics of a site), certain site-based works could possibly fit into a secondary site more easily than others. Thus, it depends entirely on the purpose of the work, the site and the practitioner who is attempting to shift his/her work. In the case of *Glitch*, it felt as though the second site did not contribute to the meaning of the performance, but rather transformed it into a performance that eventually could be placed on a stage. While the removal of the original site played a large role in this gradual progression towards *Glitch* resembling a conventional theatre production in an unconventional performance space, it was also through the removal of the interactive relationships that I found the performance becoming far more predictable and, by implication, more conventional. Ultimately, the primary element contributing to this observation was the lack of interactive relationships in the second site that had been so prominent in the first site.

#### **4.6.3 Removing the relationships**

It was primarily as a result of the movement of the performance to the secondary site that I became aware of the potential of the accidental audience, specifically with regard to their contribution to the overall performance. Missing the relationship between the audience and the accidental audience, the voyeuristic

element of the performance became lost in the Conservatoire space. More importantly, being in a larger, more open space, the audience were not subjected to being in close proximity to one another, which removed the element of them watching one another to see the responses of others. Instead, the audience formed small cliques away from the action, removing themselves from the proximity introduced by the first site. By avoiding interaction with the performers, a strange separation, reminiscent of a conventional theatre setup, began to develop, dividing the audience from the performers. This affected the very nature of the performance, which was designed to be site and audience interactive, and spectators began to watch from a single, removed spot, rather than following the action of the performance. Not only did the audience not move through the space physically, but by refraining from doing so, they were removing yet another important relationship from the performance, that being the site/audience relationship. In combination with this, the specialised nature of the Conservatoire site did not allow for the accumulation of accidental audience members. This made me re-evaluate the implications that a site has for the audience, especially in the way the site calls for the audience to respond and act.

After reviewing the effects of the removal of the relationships, especially those concerned with the accidental audience, the question posed in 3.4 can now be answered. How does the level of unpredictability usually attached to a site-specific performance become affected by the lack of accidental audience members at the site? Considering that two relationships are eliminated as a direct result of the removal of the accidental audience, that being the accidental audience/ performer relationship and the planned audience/ accidental audience relationship, the answer to this question would then be – yes the removal of this ‘type’ of audience will have a direct effect on the unpredictability of the performance.

While there is no way to measure the effectiveness of the audience’s engagement with the site, there are several differences in the environmental structures from those of traditional theatre that one could assume would alter the way in which the audience perceive their surroundings, order their behaviour and influence their perception of the performance. To start with, many people’s view of going to traditional theatre can be summarised as follows: “I sit...come in say hello to one another... lights go down I keep quiet... and something unfolds before my eyes... lights go up ...I clap” (Prigge-Pienaar 2013). Because the audience is able to navigate their way through theatre events based on a set of behavioural skills taught and constructed by society, the entire event is predictable. However, the complete opposite can be said for the site-specific environment. Removing every certainty associated with the theatre building, a site practitioner has to be open to uncertainties relating to weather, interruptions and audience guidelines. Ordinarily, the audience would be placed in a neutral auditorium, with very little environmental elements to compete with the sensory information received from the stage. However, in a site the audience is guided through a space where a number of sensory changes can be observed and felt. With reference to the two productions of *Glitch*, the audience’s response to the separate performances would potentially have been affected by (1) the change in sounds, temperature and former knowledge of the site and (2) the way the sites changed the relationship between fellow audience members (from being interactive and in close proximity to being separated and passive).



Becoming physically aware of these environmental stimuli is an element that I believe greatly affects the purpose of site-specific performance as a whole. For it is by becoming aware of the environmental shifts in the site in which you are working that you are able, in some way, to draw the audience's attention to the "real time, [and] real spaces" that can never be fully accomplished inside a theatre (McLucas in Kaye 2000:55).

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In response to the above discussion, this section will address the final conclusions drawn from this practical study with regard to the four questions proposed at the beginning of this chapter; (1) What are the effects of moving a site-specific performance from its original site to a secondary site on the relationships of the performance? (2) What is the purpose of a site-specific approach? (3) What are possible characteristics of a site-specific approach? (4) What is the director's role in this approach? By reviewing the answers to these questions, a closing discussion will look at the effectiveness of the practical design of the project, as well as the possible flaws that might have arose as a result of this design.

First to be discussed are the effects of moving the site-specific performance from the Library to the Conservatoire site, particularly for the constructed relationships between the site/audience/performers and the overall purpose of the approach. Audience/performer relationships are formed in response to the specific nature of a site. Depending on whether the site is public, private, abandoned, working or a combination of these possible categories, the site presents specific interactive relationships for each performance. This was something that was strongly identified during the process of working in and with the Library site. That being said, by moving *Glitch* between the two sites it was clear how the differences in the architecture, sounds, people and usage of the two sites affected the way in which relationships were constructed and (possibly) understood in the performance. Consequently, the change in site brought about three effects on the relationships formed in the site-specific performance: (1) a change in the audience's relationship with the site, (2) a shift in the understanding and purpose of the performance in relation to the audience's role in the performance, and (3) a passive audience. Furthermore, by removing the relationships that were originally made possible in the Library site, the performance not only lost its purpose (to comment on the occupants, architecture and behaviour in the Library site), but also the purpose of the site-specific approach.

If the purpose of a site-specific performance is to respond to a specific site as a means to draw attention to and comment on socio-political themes, identities, architectural features and circumstances that exist in "real time, [and] real spaces" (McLucas in Kaye 2000:55), then it is unlikely that a performance of this nature could ever exist in a second site and remain relevant. Of course a performance can adjust to a second site and come to respond to the alternative site's specifics, but this, at its core, is reframing, and the performance would never be considered the same as before. In saying this, the following six possible characteristics for a personalised site-specific approach were identified during the process of *Glitch*:

- The site must form the focus of the performance.
- All rehearsals should take place in the site.



- The performance's content (written script/physical vocabulary) must be developed in the site and address specific features of the site.
- The formation of interactive relationships between the performer(s)/site/audience is central to the process.
- A flexible script/performance design should be used instead of the finite texts usually associated with the traditional proscenium arch theatre.
- No designated seating should be allocated.

Whilst this performance made me even more aware of the potential of moving a site-specific work to an alternative space, especially with regard to the economic stature and longevity of the work, the fact remains that it cannot possibly be done without adjusting the work in some way. Even if the work does not have to be physically adjusted to the second site, every site carries its own specific history, sounds, location, people and current usage, which ultimately will change the meaning of the original content of the work. For this reason, it can be said that if the performance has been moved, even if it was originally created as a site-specific performance, it will automatically become a site-adjusted work because of the content and structural discrepancies of the second site. In line with this, while an attempt is made to clarify possible characteristics for a site-specific approach, they should not be thought of as finite in any way. As site practitioners Wilkie (2004) and Koplowitz (2009) continuously mention, site-specific performance is an approach that will continue to develop, evolve and grow, as it has done since the early 1980s (Pavlik & Kloetzel 2009:74). Thus, while I originally placed importance on the need to clarify possible characteristics of this approach, it is only at this specific time that the abovementioned can be seen as relevant. In saying this a site-specific approach to performance must be considered adjustable, evolving and personalised by each practitioner who takes on this type of approach when creating a performance. For this reason a practitioner needs to step out of the conventional role of director and rather become a facilitator.

Removing yourself out of the proscenium arch theatre, and being placed in an unconventional performance space, can, and as seen in this study, blur the boundaries of what you understand as your role as director and what your role actually is. Exploring a personalised approach to site-specific performance, the evolving of roles from director to facilitator was one that gradually developed out of working in direct response to the site rather than placing a preconceived idea into the site. Wanting to avoid using the site as an empty vessel or an interesting backdrop, the performance had to resonate with the site by working in complete partnership with the site. As seen in the different approaches found in site-based work done by Hanekom, Coetzer and Prigge-Pienaar, there is no fixed "director's" role, rather multiple ways in which one can approach the site. This multiplicity of approaches ultimately helps to differentiate between the different site-based approaches - as discussed in chapters 3.3 and 3.4. Understanding, and implementing this shift from director to facilitator not only formed part of the paradigm shift that is a site-specific approach, but it also highlighted that the approach that I was following was not universal but rather specific to the site, and the moment in which the performance was being created. Thus the primary role of the facilitator in a site-specific performance is to work with and in the site, instead of working with the site in mind, or isolated from the site. By doing this the

site does not become an empty vessel or interesting backdrop, but rather a core feature that influences the makeup of the performance. Finally, reflecting on the effectiveness of the design of this practical study it was noticeable in the practical process that the research questions as well as the methodology used to investigate them were in some ways flawed. Originally, the practical study aimed to investigate visual artist Richard Serra's argument of 1994, which claimed that "to move the work is to destroy the work" (Serra in Kwon 1997:194), by moving the performance to an alternative site in order to test this statement. In doing so, it became evident that the practical study was not focused exclusively on the clarification of site-specific performance, but was investigating elements of site-adjusted performance as well. Initially adamant that the study would follow out the investigation made on Serra's statement, I was not open to what was coming out of the site organically and the project became stagnant. Ignoring the possible interactive relationships with the accidental audience members in the site, much of the work created during this time was predictable and handled from the point of view of a traditional director. As I review these flaws, I have discovered that the design of the study could possibly be changed in the following ways: (1) focus on the single purpose of site-specific performance, therefore create a work that could not be moved to a second site, and (2) remove the planned audience and starting time (which are part of the traditional theatre concept) for some of the performances and reintroduce the planned audience as a way to explore the impact of these relationships on a site-specific performance, (3) concentrate less on the theoretical study and more on the knowledge becoming available through the practical study - especially with regard to a personalised site-specific to performance, and (4) look further into the origins of South African site-based performances.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **5.1 Summary**

Because I was introduced to site-specific performance from a performer's point of view, I found that my understanding of the role of the director within the site-specific approach was uninformed. Initially drawn to site-specific performance through the work of Nicola Hanekom, my gradual interest in developing my knowledge of this approach also stemmed from my awareness of the history connected to so many sites in South Africa, and the potential for the site-specific approach to engage with this history. Therefore I was interested in furthering my understanding of this approach – specifically in a practical light – in order to gain clarity with regard to the parameters of a personalised site-specific approach to performance. As my preliminary investigation proceeded, reviewing the use of the term in both a South African and European context, it became apparent that practitioners have come to use the term site-specific inconsistently. As a result, this study was constructed to investigate selected origins, possible influences and practical implications of a personalised site-specific approach to performance.

Rejecting the conformities of the traditional galleries, the pioneering European artists responsible for the initial gravitation toward the development of a site-specific approach were the visual artists involved in Dadaism, abstract expressionism and minimalism. Refusing to conform to the reason and logic of previous artistic approaches, artists Duchamp, Pollock, Andre and Rainer focused on transforming the viewer's reception of art works. They placed importance on the viewer's physical experience of art, challenging the traditionally removed and uninvolved viewer to interact through the physical experience of art works. Performance art practitioners contributed to this in two ways: by inviting audiences to witness their events and by replacing the paintbrush with the human body.

Equally interested in the development of the act of experiencing art, happening artists began to explore the potential of public spaces. Subsequently, two other aspects that influenced site-specific performance within the development of happenings were (1) the use of a flexible script and (2) the involvement of the accidental audience in performances. Showing the same interest in the potential of public spaces were artists who had become interested in constructing art from the land, in the land and bound to the land, and this became known as land art. Oppenheim's work documents the potential that these artists were beginning to find in the natural elements of the land, particularly in the way that one could begin to experience these natural elements and promote awareness of these experiences in viewers through documentation. Finally, street theatre, particularly Boal's invisible theatre, promoted an understanding of the importance of performances becoming space dependent and audience dependent. Through the construction of productions in specific spaces, Boal intended to engage with accidental audience members to provoke potential change in communities by focusing awareness on problems central to a specific community. Being introduced to the potential of performance in alternative spaces by Boal, spatial and site practitioners were identified to further this discussion from a performance perspective.

The concepts space and site are used interchangeably by theorists and practitioners alike, and were shown to have several similarities in the discussions conducted by Wilkie, de Certeau and McAuley. For this reason, the Oxford dictionary's definitions of the terms were used for this study, being space as "a continuous area or expanse that is unoccupied" and site as "a place where a particular event is happening" (Soans & Hawker 2006:992, 968). Following a two-part discussion, the first being the negotiation of space by spatial directors, and the second the use of the site in site-based performance, the study developed on these initial understandings of the terms space and site. By investigating directors Artaud, Grotowski, Schechner, Malina and Beck, three aspects could be identified as influential towards the development of a personalised site-specific approach to performance. Firstly, the selection of specific spaces for individual performances; secondly, the incorporation of the site's physical aspects as a pivotal feature contributing towards the meaning of the performance; and lastly, the removal of the conventional proscenium arch theatre's audience-performer dichotomy in order to explore performer/audience/space interactive relationships. The second part of this discussion focused on the use of the site in site-based approaches: site-adjusted, site-generic, site-sympathetic and site-specific.

Collected under the overarching term site-based performance, these individual approaches were differentiated, in this study, on their use of the site. Thus, in short, a site-sympathetic approach places the site in a secondary position to the written script. A site-adjusted approach places importance on the reactive nature of the performance to the site, allowing the site to reframe the performance. A site-generic approach creates a performance with a generic site in mind, such as a swimming pool, thereby allowing the performance to move between sites and remain as unchanged as possible. Finally, a site-specific approach places the site at the centre of the creative process, responding directly to that site, preventing the performance from being intelligible in any other site but that in which it was originally created. Although I initially equated site-adjusted and site-generic, the practical work of site-based directors Hanekom, Coetzer and Prigge-Pienaar helped me to correct this view by informing the study of the flexible nature of these approaches. Seeing the practical application of the site-adjusted, site-generic and site-specific approaches in Hanekom, Coetzer and Prigge-Pienaar's work, my own concern lay in exploring the site-specific approach further, specifically in the light of Gleave referring to it as "restrictive". Four questions proposed at this point and considered during the design of this practical project related to (1) What are the effects of moving a site-specific performance from its original site to a secondary site on the relationships of the performance? (2) What is the purpose of a site-specific approach? (3) What are possible characteristics of a site-specific approach? (4) What is the director's role in this approach?

Having had six weeks to complete this study, five weeks of rehearsals and one week for showings, I used the practical study to create a performance using my current understanding of the site-specific approach, that being (i) all rehearsals should be conducted in the site, (ii) nothing should be brought into the site that was not originally there, and (iii) audience/performer interaction should be allowed. Bearing these original points in mind, the creative process led me to recognise the need for a paradigm shift in my own approach. By doing so, my understanding of a personalised site-specific approach developed four new realisations: (1)

there is no director in a site-specific approach, only a facilitator, (2) the unpredictability of the site is what makes site-specific work unique, (3) there is no clear-cut rule for the importation of sound, props and costumes, and (4) interactive relationships between the site/performer/accidental and planned audience are imperative. Other uncertainties that arose at this time were the clarity of the purpose of this approach, as well as the possibility for a set of characteristics to define a personalised approach. Considering several opinions on the purpose of site-specific performance, my understanding of the purpose, as identified in my practical study, was to create a work in response to a specific site as a means to draw attention to and comment on socio-political themes, architectural elements and identity and to question the circumstances that exist in the real time and spaces of the site. As mentioned in the delineation, this study investigated a personalised approach to site-specific performance, and through the praxis it became apparent that this particular performance focused specifically on the architectural design of the site and not necessarily the socio-political context.

After completing this practical study, I found that, while it is possible to create a set of characteristics for a site-specific approach, they should not be thought of as final, but rather as characteristics specific to that particular performance under investigation as well as the practitioner who is involved in the creation of the performance. It is by creating work reactive to a specific site that the practitioner adopts an approach specific to that site in order to address that site's function (architectural, sensual and historical). It would be detrimental to the approach to create a set of generalised characteristics that a practitioner should follow when using a site-specific approach to performance. In light of this, the approach reported on in this study, is one informed by the praxis as well as the theoretical study, and is a personalised site-specific approach to performance, unstable in nature and able to change.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

After completing my theoretical and practical study, I could make the following conclusions:

### **Conclusion 1:**

By following a site-specific approach to creating a performance, a practitioner has to be prepared to abandon the role of director and instead take the position of facilitator.

Traditionally, the theatre director is understood to be the primary decision maker in the creative process. Having undergone the practical exploration of a site-specific approach it became apparent to me very early on in the process that the primary decision maker in this instance was in fact the site. With little existing information on the role of the director in a site-specific approach, my primary understanding of this role was therefore based on the directorial approach of Nicola Hanekom, as seen in the creative process of *Lot*, *Betèda* and *Babbel*. In these performances, Hanekom's understanding of the role of the director differed very little from that of the role usually taken by a traditional theatre director. Managing the site as I usually would a rehearsal room, the specificities of the site's architecture, sounds and usage etc. became compromised by my own preconceived ideas. Three results of approaching the site in this way were: (1) the performers' responses to the site became restricted, (2) there were very few opportunities for rehearsals to

become affected by unexpected interruptions, and (3) the process lacked the spontaneous development of the site/performer and performer/accidental audience relationships. Abandoning the idea of being a 'director' and stepping into the role of facilitator was indicative of the shift in the way that I personally related to the site. Instead of forcing preconceived ideas onto the site, it was a process of responding directly to the site that was needed. Therefore the role of the facilitator is to guide the performers' natural responses to the site and help manage the outcome of this into a constructed performance.

### Conclusion 2:

The purpose of a site-specific approach is not fixed, but shifts with every project, depending on the focus of that specific performance and the site in which it is found.

Various practitioners, such as Koplowitz, Kaye, Boal and Coetzer, have proposed possible 'purposes' for the site-specific approach. However, throughout the study I was unable to obtain clarity with regard to the exclusivity of one specific suggestion. Therefore, as beneficial as these suggestions were as a starting point, one cannot consider any one 'purpose' as conclusive of the approach as a whole, but rather conclusive of that specific practitioner's personal experience of the approach to the site he/she was exploring. At risk of becoming vague, the aspect that differentiates the purpose of a site-specific approach to that of other site-based categories is the aim behind the approach. In Koplowitz, Kaye, Boal and Coetzer's discussions surrounding the purpose of site-specific performance, it is made clear that the purpose behind this approach is to comment on and/or question the specifics of the site. These 'specifics' could potentially be the site's architecture, sounds, people or socio-political status, however it is important that the work is created in response to the specific nature of the site, instead of general themes. In retrospect, by allowing the purpose behind this approach to remain open-ended, the approach is encouraged to become regenerative, continuously developing and remaining relevant within every new context.

### Conclusion 3:

Although there should be limitations to what you bring into the site, it is restrictive, at times, to say this, especially in relation to the introduction of props, sound and costumes.

My understanding of site-specific performance initially led me to believe that, unless found in the site, props could not be introduced, as they had the potential to mask or alter the nature of the site. While there are many opinions on this, my understanding of the inclusion of foreign items in the site changed as I became more involved in the practical component of this study. Beginning with the inclusion of 'found' sound and 'found' objects, there was a fine line between what could eventually be considered "brought" into the site. This does not suggest that the site can become reconstructed, through the inclusion of seats, a set design and lighting, into a replica of the proscenium arch stage. Rather, I am suggesting that, if a practitioner works in response to a site's natural inclinations, there is a possibility that sound, perhaps even a specific type of lighting, props and costumes can be included without disrupting the essence of the site. In my project I found that, by including manufactured sound in a site used for hosting concerts, the sound was not foreign but rather

commented on the past usage of the site. In the same way, the costumes, while dramatic and theatrical, were not included to draw attention away from the site, but rather to emphasise the site's architecture and former use – once again referencing the annual productions that take place there. I understand that this is one possible opinion, and that it should be considered with caution, but would say that the inclusion of elements in the site can be dependent on three aspects: (1) the nature of the site, (2) the purpose of the performance in the site and (3) the practitioner's personal preferences.

#### Conclusion 4:

Though a set of characteristics cannot be made finite for a site-specific approach to performance, two key features can be identified as possible fundamentals, namely (1) the centrality of the site within the performance and (2) interactive relationships.

Although I previously understood the role of the site in a site-specific approach from a theoretical standpoint, it was during the practical study that my knowledge of the importance of this site centrality actually developed. Keeping the rehearsal process exclusively in the site, the rehearsals eventually became focused on responding directly to the site, instead of on the ideas that I, as director, was trying to import into or onto the site. As a result, the rehearsals became open to exploring a number of unplanned interactive relationships, which neither Schechner nor Grotowski had spoken about in their theoretical studies. Noticing how the site (as central informer) constructed these interactive relationships in the practical study, I also became aware of how these relationships allowed for the performance to become regenerative, specifically in the way it commented on the site's occupants and current activity. Understanding that the site is responsible for the construction of these relationships, as well as the degree to which they are interactive, it is my opinion that by removing the preconditioned audience-performer dichotomy of the conventional theatre, these relationships will automatically appear in site-specific performance, unless purposefully determined by the site to be unnecessary.

In the light of this conclusion, the primary research question proposed for this study, namely *Are there identifiable characteristics for a site-specific approach to performance?* can now be answered. While the study identified two key features – the centrality of the site and interactive relationships – because of the very nature of the approach being responsive, a set of general characteristics could not be identified, as with every new site a new list could be generated.

#### Conclusion 5:

A site-specific approach to performance can be seen as a paradigm shift, according to which everything that is usually associated with the proscenium arch theatre should be reconsidered.

In the light of what has already been concluded, the role of director was most affected by this paradigm shift. Removing the certainties of the rehearsal room, the stage as well as the auditorium, very little is left for the director to "control" in the site. Thus, by accepting to acknowledge this shift, my approach to the site,



performers, rehearsals, unpredictable occurrences, performances and audience had to change. It was only by doing this, and accepting the role of facilitator, that I could place the site at the centre of the performance. If one becomes reluctant to allow this paradigm shift, the performance generated from the site will not be entirely “site-specific”, but rather will be a collective of ideas that you, as director, have placed in the site as a result of your need to manage the site and the work that comes out of it.

### **5.3 Possible further research**

The first possible research question that I would suggest for further study is the potential of the site-specific approach in a community-based setting. I initially was introduced to the potential of this in Boal’s invisible theatre, and the ability of such performances to intercept everyday events unknowingly became a pivotal discussion point throughout my practical study, especially amongst my cast. Seeing the impact of occupying a public space, and how this occupancy affected the students, furthered my interest in the potential of site-specific performance as a way to engage with societal problems or, better yet, to involve community members as performers in community-based projects. Subsequently, by looking at the history of South African legislation with regard to previously restrained spaces (such as the 1913 Natives Land Act), one can see how site-specific performance, as an approach, could be relevant in South Africa.

Secondly, since I was equally interested in European approaches to site-specific performance, I would suggest that a comparative study of site-specific performance in Europe and South Africa could be undertaken. There are numerous site-based companies in Europe, including *Red Earth*, *Wrights & Sites*, *Brith Gof* and *Task Force*, and there also seems to be a developing interest in site-specific performance in the UK. Since 2010 there has been a definite growth in the amount of site-based work being created in South Africa, which I have noticed at the major festivals (KKNK and Grahamstown National Arts Festival). It therefore would be interesting to look at the different approaches that a select few companies may have, specifically those based in the UK versus those in South Africa. Two specific companies that I would consider exploring and comparing are *Task Force* and *Darkroom Contemporary*, particularly with regard to their site-specific film-based contributions.

Likewise, another area that strongly suggests further research is the origins and development of site-specific performance amongst South African practitioners. Mentioning but a select few in this study, namely Hanekom, Coetzer and Prigge-Pienaar, it is only now that I have become aware of the growth of the site-specific approach amongst other practitioners. One specific performance artist that I would focus on with regard to this is Anthea Moys. Seeing how she uses visual art/performance art in public spaces in order to allure the unexpected audience members into a space, whilst placing unconventional commentary on these spaces has placed her as the winner of the Standard Bank Young Artist award of 2013. Placing a significant amount of importance on the politics of public spaces as well as who should, and should not use them, I imagine Moys to be a practitioner who would offer a lot of insight into the development of the site-specific approach from a South African standpoint.

Lastly, and in line with the aims of this study, I have become increasingly interested in following not only a site-specific approach to creating a performance, but also in the implications of following a site-generic, site-adapted and/or site-sympathetic approach. While there might always be questions surrounding the correct use of terminology, my interest is not in finding individual definitions for these approaches, but rather to explore the nature of the site within their application. It therefore would be interesting to explore, as I did in this study, the individual approaches, specifically in relation to the purpose of the approach and the impact that the site has within the context of the approach.

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## ADDENDUM A: Images



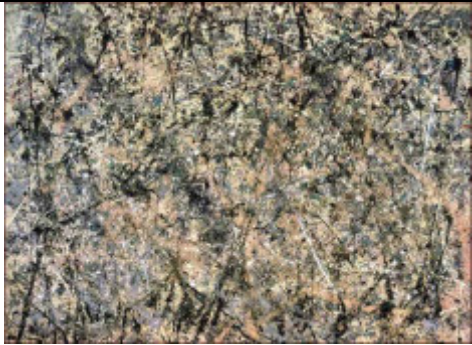

Image.	Title	Photograph
Image 1	Fountain	
Image 2	Wayward Landscape	
Image 3	Lavender Mist	
Image 4	Autumn Rhythm	






Image 5	Equivalent VIII	
Image 6(a)	144 Steel Squares	
Image 6(b)	Hot-rolled Steel	
Image 7	Anthropometries	









Image 8	Klein's audience	
Image 9	Living Sculpture	
Image 10	Interior Scroll	
Image 11	Spiral Jetty	

Image 12	A Line made by walking	
Image 13	A Circle in the Andres	
Image 14	Installation at Galerie	
Image 15	Double Negative	

## **ADDENDUM B: Happenings**

### **1. Washes, Claes Oldenburg**

Creation of *Washes* followed the procedure established in previous pieces:

1. A period of about two weeks, of priming myself with possibilities- practical and impractical- for a pool piece, recording these in a book, and writing a number of script drafts.
2. Familiarizing myself with the particular place. In this case by signing up for massage, etc, at Al Roon's. Noticing the importance of sound in the hall, the impossibility of any rapid action. Details of the normal activity of the Health Club.
3. Recruiting the cast from volunteers, some new and some familiar from past performances. Setting up schedule of rehearsals. First meeting.
4. Purchase of objects and costumes. In this case mostly from Canal street stores, Avenue C used clothing stores, several "thrift" shops, swimming pool suppliers, and sporting goods stores.
5. First three rehearsals, combining prepared ideas, actual place, individuals in cast, and objects and costumes. Confusion and numerous trials and errors.
6. Final rehearsal: simplification of results of first rehearsals to strongest incidents, discussing of the rest. Imposition of simple time scheme of cues.
7. Four performances before audience in May 1965, with changes continuing to final performance.

*Washes* depended as usual very much on place. The involvement of the audience was mostly through place conditions: humidity, difficult placement (they had to stand on the narrow edges of the pool), tension of wet and dry. A mass audience swim which had been planned was called off at the last minute because of the management's objections. Audience was asked to wear bathing suits.

The final script of *Washes* contained ten untitled parts. The timing of the parts was done by me and light signals were used to cue beginning and end. White lights were placed over the water and over the shallow and deep ends; turning these on cued actions. The intervals between parts were lit by dim blue lights. The length of each part varied for each performance according to my intuition of the pace. I watched the action with my back to the pool through a window reflection.

Al Roon's pool is in the basement of the Riverside Plaza Hotel on Manhattan's West 73<sup>rd</sup> St. The pool is seventy-five feet by twenty-five feet, and is surrounded by an edge about a foot wide. Back of this edge is a space around the pool on the two long sides and the shallow end varying from two to three feet wide. On long side, doors open the length of the pool to a gymnasium (which revealed the crowding of audience on that side).

The water is mostly over the head. The shallow portion extends only about ten feet, beyond which one must swim. Numbers mark the edges of the pool every five feet. There are two ladders at both the long ends. At the deep end the space behind the pool edge widens, and this is the area referred to as the deep stage, where the audience was not permitted to stand. At the back of this area are doors leading to a Hot Room and Steam Bath and Solarium, overhung with yellow plastic awnings. To the left facing the deep stage is the locker room and offstage, where the players waited and dressed.

The audience waited in the adjoining gym until the pool was ready. The water was calm and a red light was set floating in the water. The light stayed in the water throughout the performance, as did all the objects that were placed in the water, so that the pool- a strong green color- changed from a perfectly still body of water to one in which clothing, furniture, people, pipes, and other debris as after a flood.

A figure called Lifeguard (so identified by his costume on which the title was printed) and I (wearing oversize overalls dyed a bright yellow) aided the ushers of Theatre Rally in positioning the audience around three sides of the pool. I was friendly, shaking hands with people while telling them not to smoke, not to throw things in the pool, etc. - instructions from management. When the audience was placed I took a

position at my window. On the first three nights I asked the audience to be as quiet as possible so that the small sounds of the piece would not be missed. But at the cast's urging I did not make this announcement the fourth night, which permitted laughter and applause, and which, as it turned out, did not prevent the small sounds from being heard. I suppose I wanted to inhibit the audience.

The situation at the beginning of the piece was as follows: on the deep stage there were a massage table, a phonograph with a record of continuous thunder, two oil drums with a folded giant American flag on top, and a bridge (later to be placed across the centre of the pool) on the floor. On the edge of the pool at the deep end, Pat, or a fat Humpty- Dumpty like figure holding a net at the end of a metal stick, fished for plastic bananas and pears which she threw in. at the edge of the shallow end were a woman, Letty, in a bathing suit, and a man, David, fully clad. These three players were in position as the audience entered.

I signalled the man stationed at the lights, D. Farbman, and the white lights tuned blue. I signalled him again and the white lights returned, starting the piece.

## **Part One**

Marjorie enters, in a white costume like a flier, with a white flier's cap and dark blue sunglasses. She puts on the phonograph record of thunder and commences exercising on the massage table. She counts  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $1\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $2\frac{1}{8}$ , etc.. while exercising.

Lucas enters in a suit and shirt and hat, all dyed blue, carrying a yellow chair. He crosses the deep stage, walks along the pool edge to a point near the centre. He tries the chair on the water several times. Then tries sitting on it and sinks. He repeats the action. After several sittings/ sinkings he takes off his clothes and ties them on the chair, jacket over back, pants across, shoes on seat, as a man going to bed might place his clothes. From this point the chair becomes a free piece, floating with its load of clothes this way and that during the remaining composition. Lucas also, in a bathing suit and carrying a stainless steel disk, becomes a free piece, or "floater", with instructions to improvise action until his appearance in Part Eight. Through my glass I see him study himself from the edge in the disk like Narcissus. (Another time he floated on his back like a seal looking up into the disk.)

David, as soon as the pat begins, starts walking fully dressed into the water down the shallow ladder, until only his head is above water. He walks out, waits a moment, and then walks in again. To the audience his figure under water appears compressed like a midget's. When the part around ends, David becomes a "floater" or free piece, continuing to improvise around the action of cutting his clothes off with scissors until Part Nine, and also helping Letty ties red balloons at the start of Part One and continues to so do until Part Nine.

Pat continues to fish, moving around the edges of the pool, introducing herself into other actions, and obscuring the view of the audience, until Part Eight.

*Approximate time: four minutes.*

## **Part Two**

After a blue interval (about  $\frac{1}{4}$  minute), white lights again. Rudy dives into pool immediately on entering deep stage. Anina enters, walking along the pool edge, carrying a small silver cup and wearing a leopard skin fur, like water wings. Tied on her ankles is a cow bell which hangs over the pool edge and sounds as she walks. She struts, walks jerkily, stops, runs, and in this variety of gaits makes her way all around the pool. Meanwhile Rudy throws himself against the pool sides trying to grab at her ankles, following her in an irregular pattern though the water, sometimes crossing the pool to return violently. The part ends and they swim out in blue light; exit.

*Approximate time: two minutes.*

## **Part Three**

Gloria enters carrying a Styrofoam and plastic floating chair (white and green with blue trim and plastic drinking glasses sunk in the arm). Also magazine, banana, safety razor, and folding measuring stick (and other objects of her own choosing). Wearing a net cap and one-piece black bathing suit. Launches chair and

climbs in. Thereafter she moves freely around the edges of the pool, measuring them, sometimes using the stick as a fishing rod, reading magazines, shaving her legs, eating banana, and saying at intervals “I lost seventy-eight pounds” or variations thereof, while looking up at the audience or tugging at their ankles. Gloria continues as a “floater” through as many parts as she wishes. Dorothea and Max enter. Max launches the two oil drums, throwing them in the water with a great splash. Dorothea takes the folded giant American flag, walks to the center edge and there slips into the water with the flag. She wears gold gloves. Max composes a percussion piece slamming the barrels together with a variety of resonant sounds. Dorothea spreads the giant flag in water. After a while the wet flag is draped over both barrels in a funeral effect. When the part ends, Max and Dorothea remove the flag and let it sink to the pool bottom.

*Approximate time: four minutes.*

#### **Part Four**

Marjorie re-enters in same white costume, puts on record of thunder. Exercises as before.

Yvonne walks around the pool in a white costume, to the shallow end. Walks into water, costume floating around her body.

Walter enters with ladder, walks down opposite side, puts ladder into water, and composes it in relation to the pool edge, also extending it to Yvonne who swims away from it (as if avoiding an attempt at rescue). Walter slips into pool, continues to manipulate ladder towards Yvonne, raising ladder in water, turning it around. After about a minute and a half, Yvonne leaves the water and strips off the white dress to a black net bathing suit. She returns along the pool edge and Walter, leaving ladder to float in the water, follows her. She waits for him but walks away just as he reaches her. This is repeated until she returns to the point where she entered, as he nears this time, she jumps in the pool. Walter leaves stage. Yvonne swims out. Marjorie turns off record of thunder and leaves deep stage.

*Approximate time: three minutes.*

#### **Part Five**

Barbara and Debby enter carrying a parachute dyed red. Each taking on end they walk the length of the pool on opposite edges. The parachute unfurls as they walk and drags in the water. Reaching the shallow end, they let go the parachute, which spreads in the pool. They are wearing summer dresses which they strip off to white underwear and slide into the water. They wrestle in the water entangling themselves in the parachute. As they wrestle, they laugh, pausing from time to time to spread the chute in the green water.

Henry enters on deep stage, carrying a yellow rubber boat with a blue bottom, a “soft” paddle (pipe painted ivory with a red rubber paddle flapping), a newspaper, a folded white plastic sheet and smoking a cigar. He wears sunglasses and a robe. With the aid of the lifeguard, he climbs into the boat and paddles out with some difficulty to about the centre of the pool. He reads his paper and smokes. After a time, he puts down the paper and covers himself entirely with the white plastic sheet.

Barbara appears on the deep stage after Henry has “slept” a while. She wears a bathing suit, harsh red lipstick, and has kept her hair dry. She enters the pool by the ladder and stealthily and slowly swims to Henry’s boat, carrying a rope which she attaches to the boat. She swims back pulling the boat and Henry. On reaching the deep end ladder, she ties the boat, leaves the pool and stage.

After a moment, Henry wakes up, takes off the sheet, gathers his possessions, climbs out, leaving the rubber boat tied to the ladder.

The white lights go out and the wrestling girls leave the water and walk out along the edge in blue. The parachute remains in the pool.

*Approximate time: six minutes.*

#### **Part Six**

Ellen and Sarah appear on deep stage. Sarah climbs into the water, being careful not to wet her hair. Ellen takes a position at the end of the long edge of the pool. Slowly they proceed the length of the pool, Ellen walking, Sarah swimming in a straight line. Their eyes are fixed on each other. Each anticipates the other's action. If one moves slightly forward, the other immediately makes up the distance, so that they remain perfectly parallel. When they reach the shallow end, Ellen joins Sarah in the water. They stand facing one another absolutely still just to the side of the shallow ladder.

Al and Geoffrey enter with the girls but remain in the background pacing the deep stage until the girls reach the centre of the pool. Then they begin to wrestle. Slapping one another's flesh so that it resounds in the hall. When the girls reach the shallow end and face each other. Al and Geoffrey pick up short lengths of dry two-by-fours and smack them together. They move down opposite sides the length of the pool, as if their battle continued despite the interposition of the water. They wear aprons of rubber and bathing suits. The sounds are sharp and earsplitting. When the two reach the shallow end, they put the sticks down on the edge and leap in the water, continuing to wrestle. Sarah and Ellen leave the pool at this point and both walk slowly the length of the pool and off stage. Al and Geoffrey swim the pool length vigorously and climb out.

*Approximate time: four minutes.*

### **Part Seven/ part Eight/ Part Nine**

Part Seven, part Eight, and Part Nine are not separated by blue intervals. But the blue light does go on during film projection in Part Eight. When the wrestlers exit, a bridge which first over the pool, of reinforced wood, about two feet wide, is lifted from the floor of the deep stage and carried by the Lifeguard and me to a spot about centre of pool under a light. The bridge is tested.

Pat, who as a "floater" has moved fishing around the edges, mounts the bridge and begins removing her fat costume of many garments, laying them as if to dry along the bridge.

Four men, Raymond, Michael, Richard, Jon, in bathing suits enter deep stage with a set of stovepipes joined in different ways through which a clothesline dyed red has been threaded. Two of them enter the pool and tie the end of the line to the bridge. The other two remain onstage pushing the stovepipes down the line into the water. At the same time, four women, Elaine, Martha, Nancy, and Jakie, enter through the audience at the shallow end. They are fully dressed. They walk into the water by the shallow ladder. One of them carries a length of the red clothesline, swims out to the bridge, and attaches it. The other end is attached to the shallow ladder. The women remove their clothes, including their shoes, and hang them on the red line with clothespins.

The four men interrupt their threading of pipe to grunt and lie on the edge of the pool breathing very hard. The four women from time to time wash each other with a long brush and sponges and whistle one note.

The action of the four men and four women (Part Seven) continues through the dance of Lucas and Pat (Part Eight) and the balloon sequence of Letty and David (Part Nine).

Pat, having removed her fat clothes and laid them out, makes herself up, sitting on the bridge, and puts on white kneesocks and a white short sailor blouse.

Lucas gives up his role as "floater," mounts the bridge, dries himself, and puts on a pair of oversized ivory-colored nylon pyjama pants. He 'walks' in different ways, putting different parts of his body in the pyjamas. At one point, his hand wearing a shoe "walks" one pyjama leg while he holds one of his legs up inside. He attaches small plungers to his body which stick out under the nylon. He stuffs the pyjama bottoms with a rubber green alligator. When he has finished his pyjama-bottom dance and Pat has finished making up and redressing, they join in a dance with a sheet. The sheet is first held out horizontally, then shaken, then turned vertically. It catches the white light of a film projector running without film, which projects the silhouettes of the sheet and dancers on the audience and wall at the shallow end. The blue light is on during projection. Pat and Lucas come together, kiss for a moment, fold the sheet once, repeat the horizontal-shake-vertical action. Come together again, kiss, fold twice and so on until the sheet, having been folded several times, is just a bundle and hard to shake. The sheet is loosened, the projector goes off. Lucas covers himself and Pat with the sheet, holds her upside down, and the dance continues with limbo protruding. After a while, Lucas



removes the sheet, places it carefully on the surface of the pool, picks Pat up under the arms and drops her toes- first into the sheet. She plummets into the water, the sheet closing around her.

Near the climax of this dance, Letty, who is now completely covered with blown-up red balloons, rises from her position seated at the shallow edge and enters the water with the aid of David on the shallow ladder. She floats. She floats out into the water bounded by the bridge and the women's clothesline, perfectly rigid. David, who during the performance has cut his clothes off, walks into the water in his bathing suit and swims up to and around Letty. After a moment of letting her float, he begins biting balloons, holding them so that they pop with a loud sound that resounds in the hall. He bites one balloon after another until all are bitten and broken and Letty sinks. Then he swims away.

*Approximate time of Parts Seven, Eight, Nine: ten minutes.*

## **Part Ten**

A blue interval, brief. When the white lights come on, all players except Marjorie and Lifeguard enter water and float as if drowned. Marjorie puts on record of thunder and exercises. After about a minute, the Lifeguard (Alex) blows his whistle. Marjorie leaves the deep stage. The drowned come to life and swim toward deep end. A record is put on of Brahms Symphony No. 1, Finale, played by David Rose in syncopation.

*Approximate time: two minutes.*

**The piece is over.**

## **2. Self- Service, Allan Kaprow**

*Self-Service*, a piece without spectators, was performed in the summer of 1967 in Boston, New York, and Los Angeles. It spanned four months, June through September. Thirty-one activities were selected from a much larger number. Their time and locality distribution were determined by chance methods. Participants selected events from those offered for their city; each had to pick at least one, although doing many or all was preferable. Details of time and place were flexible within each month; choices made from month to month overlapped, some actions recurring. Activities took place among those of the participants' normal lives. These were not necessarily coordinated; it was by chance that some actions turned out to be similar in two or all of the cities. Just as fortuitous were parallels between Happening and daily events.

The time pattern and the number of events for each city:

	June	July	August	September
Boston	8	6	3	7
New York	9	1	5	3
Los Angeles	24	12	18	21

*Note- The printed format below has been condensed from my original spatial arrangement; my conception was to surround all activities with large amounts of emptiness, emphasizing their independent functions. Ideally, each activity should be printed on a separate \ loose page; this would reduce the sense of hierarchies implicit in our book structure.*

A.K.

### **New York ( Available activities)**

On the shoulder of a stretch of highway, a fancy banquet table is laid out, food on plates, money in sources. Everything left there.

People stand on bridges, on street corners, watch cars pass. After 200 red ones, they leave.

An empty house. Nails are hammered halfway into all surfaces of rooms, house is locked, hammers go away.

Couples make love in hotel rooms. Before they check out, they cover everything with large sheets of black plastic film.

Rockets, spread over several miles, go up in red smoke, explode, scatter thousands of scraps of paper with messages.

On the street, kids give paper flowers to people with pleasant faces.

Couples kiss in the midst of the world, go on.

People shout in subway just before getting off, leave immediately.

Warehouse or dump or used refrigerators. People bring packages of ice, transistor radios, and put them into the boxes. Radios are turned on, refrigerator doors are shut, people leave. On another day they return, sit inside with radios for a while, and quietly listen.

Everyone watches for either:

A signal from someone.

A light to go on in a window.

A plane to pass directly overhead.

An insect to land nearby.

Three motorcycles to barrel past.

Immediately afterwards, they write a careful description of the occurrence, and mail copies to each other.

### **Boston (Available Activities)**

Many shoppers begin to whistle in aisles of supermarket.

After a few minutes they go back to their shopping.

Two people telephone each other. Phone rings once, is answered "hello." Caller hangs up. After a few minutes, other person does same. Same answer. Phone clicks off. Repeated with two rings, three rings, four rings, five rings, six rings, seven, eight, nine, etc... until a line is busy.

At a supermarket(on another day) transistor radios playing rock are put into shelves of cereals, soaps, freezers, bananas, napkins, etc. left there. On still another day, bouquets are tucked in with products.

3:00 AM emptiness at a 24-hour washerette. Piles of clothes washed. Turning cylinders, blue-white fluorescents. Regularly on the half hour, loud bunch of photogs burst in, flash pix, leave. Home at five.

In a neighbourhood, people inflate by mouth a twenty – foot weather balloon. It is pushed through the streets and buried in a hole at the beach. The people leave it.

For a few moments at night, shouts, words, calls, all through bullhorns. Voices moving on the streets, form windows, around corners, in hallways, alleys.

Cars drive into filling station, erupt with white foam pouring from windows.

People tie tar paper around many cars in supermarket lot.

On another day, twenty or more flash-gun cameras shoot off at same time all over supermarket; shopping resumed.

### **Los Angeles (Available Activities)**

Cars drive into filling station, erupt with white foam pouring from windows.

Many shoppers begin to whistle in aisles of supermarket.

After a few minutes they go back to their shopping.

Photos of supermarket and washerette projected onto clouds, into air.

Night in the country. Many cars, mixing on different roads about a mile from a certain point, lights blinking, horns beeping sporadically, converge and disperse.

Photos of supermarket and washerette sent to everyone.

Two people telephone each other. Phone rings once, is answered "hello." Caller hangs up. After a few minutes, other person does same. Same answer. Phone clicks off. Repeated with two rings, three rings, four rings, five rings, six rings, seven, eight, nine, etc... until a line is busy.

Warehouse or dump or used refrigerators. People bring packages of ice, transistor radios, and put them into the boxes. Radios are turned on, refrigerator doors are shut, people leave. On another day they return, sit inside with radios for a while, and quietly listen.

3:00 AM emptiness at a 24-hour washerette. Piles of clothes

Washed. Turning cylinders, blue-white fluorescents. Regularly on the half-hour, loud photogs burst in, flash pix, leave. Home at five.

Everyone watches for either:

A signal from someone.

A light to go on in a window.

A plane to pass directly overhead.

An insect to land nearby.

Three motorcycles to barrel past.

Immediately afterwards, they write a careful description of the occurrence, and mail copies to each other.

In glass booths, people listen to records. They look at each other and dance.

On the streets, kids give paper flowers to people with pleasant faces.

People tie tar paper around many cars in supermarket lot.

Some people whistle a tune in the crowded elevator of an office building.

A car is built on an isolated mountain top from junk parts. Is left.

People shout in subway just before getting off, leave immediately.

A daytime procession of cars on a highway, brights on. At random, and momentarily, fifteen feet of thin plastic film streams from cars' windows, is drawn back inside. Half-hour later, cars disperse.

People enter public phone booths, eat sandwiches and drink sodas, look out at the world.

A long parade. Children and adults carry blank posters and banners. Quiet rhythm on pots and pans.

Someone, waiting for a person with a sad face, rides on bus.

The person is tailed until no longer possible. Then a person with a really funny face is looked for. Time to go home.

An empty house. Nails are hammered halfway into all surfaces of rooms, house is locked, hammers go away.

People stand on bridges, on street corners, watch cars pass. After 200 red ones, they leave.

A path of slices of bread and jam is made for a great distance in the woods.

Rockets, spread over several miles, go up in red smoke, explode, scatter thousands of scraps of paper with messages.

In a neighbourhood, people inflate by mouth a twenty – foot weather balloon. It is pushed through the streets and buried in a hole at the beach. The people leave it.

Some torn paper is released from a high window, piece by piece, and slowly watched.

### **ADDENDUM C: Expanding on *Resident Glitch/Rise of the Glitch***

Parameters for this game went as follows: the performer with the most *Café go* cups would be given the most amount of superiority within the entire group. With this superiority, a hierarchy was formed within the production, which could in turn be challenged by allowing performers to be able to steal one another's cups throughout the performance. By placing a value on these cups, a sense of purpose was instilled in the production that in turn helped to shift the performers' focus from merely imitating aspects of the site to physically investigating them. Although this game was introduced as a preliminary improvisation, it soon became the foundation upon which the final construction of *Glitch* was formed.